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## Archival of the Fittest: The Role of Archives in Constructing Gay Dutch Historical Memory

Brooks Hosfeld  
*Butler University*

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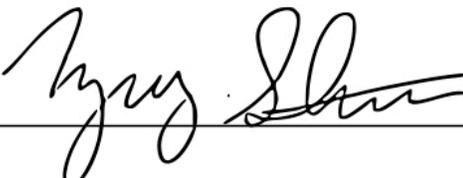
Applicant Brooks Hosfeld  
(Name as it is to appear on diploma)

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Read, approved, and signed by:

Thesis adviser(s) Zach Scarlett \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
5/7/2019  
Date

Reader(s) Ageeth Sluis \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
5/9/2019  
Date

**Archival of the Fittest: The Role of Archives in  
Constructing Gay Dutch Historical Memory**

A Thesis

Presented to the Departments of History

Anthropology

Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies

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## ABSTRACT:

Truth, particularly in history, is subjective and constructed through memory. Memory, in turn, is created by archivists, as they actively choose and preserve the narratives made available to researchers and the public; they hold a key position in deciding what is widely understood about what happened in the past. In the same way archivist bias leads to historical erasure, archivists establish historical remembering when they actively make space for individuals and groups who are traditionally omitted from past narratives. Community archives stand distinct from state counterparts, as they restructure what is deemed valuable enough to be preserved within historical memory, thus shifting power to marginalized people reclaiming the past and future.

Though a case study of IHLIA LGBT Heritage (frequently shortened to IHLIA), an LGBTI-specific archive in Amsterdam, I unpack archival biases and decisions that contribute to collective memory. Extending the production of memory beyond archival walls, IHLIA has recently presented a public exhibit entitled *With Pride* to celebrate the institution's fortieth anniversary and the four decades of LGBT activism in Amsterdam since its founding. While archives are semi-public spaces dictating historical narrative through meticulous collecting, exhibits heighten visibility of selectively-curated information through public access; the coalition between archive and exhibit at IHLIA intensifies the efficiency of memorializing a gay past. By analyzing these spaces, I call to attention the value and necessity of community-based archives, identify IHLIA's role in Dutch homonationalism, and critique archivists' decentering of queer audiences and generational identities.

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My Amsterdam advisor, Dr. Jana Byars, was steadfastly patient and supportive in helping me fight off imposter syndrome at least a dozen times and guiding me to self-created solutions to any problem during the research process.

This project is possible in its current form thanks to the connections and archival insight offered by Connie van Gils, my supervisor at IHLIA LGBT Heritage, and the staff who shared their time and histories with me.

Research partner Sarah Silverstein and unofficial intellectual soundboard Audrey Pope honor me as peers and friends, sharing community while growing thought and theory. Izzy Thieme, Michael Waters, and Josie Herbert additionally have been vital chosen family members as we individually and collectively navigated Amsterdam as both a literal and figurative space.

I owe gratitude to countless others who supported me throughout this project. Thank you.

## PREFACE:

I believed in the freedom of Amsterdam. After growing up in primarily white, upper-middle class, Midwest suburb, only the recent years of my life have held spaces where my queerness is not treated as difficult or abnormal. I bought into the idea that the Netherlands would offer a whole country where I wouldn't have to worry about my gender presentation when I walked into a bathroom or hear a scolding "ma'am" while ordering coffee, because sex is casual and gender is whatever. I was mistaken. The revolutionary, anarchist energy proclaimed about the city from the United States seems a notion of decades past, continued underground and publicly constructed for the optimistic tourists (like myself) searching for a place to be more ourselves. After making the city my home for a few months, I am appalled that anyone who has been to the city, however briefly, can avoid seeing through the mask of this image to uphold the idea that "anything goes."

The research that resulted from three months in the Netherlands, then, is rooted in personal connection and belief that queer people deserve better than what cisheterosexual societies offer us. This thesis was created around the experiences and research of a semester in Amsterdam, during which I took gender studies classes and experienced what was described as a liberal city of queers and punks and sex. Upon arrival, I was quickly reminded of the definitive differences between liberal and radical ideology, as well as the differences of how emancipation is defined between those who need and already have it.

IHLIA LGBT Heritage, the archive at the core of my research that I assumed would embody the complexities of queer experience in Dutch society, was a place I was sure would understand and wholly support radical queerness, even if the rest of the city didn't. If anywhere I would be allowed to be safely, freely queer, this archive would be it, as it collected the

expressions and histories of people around the world. My hopes were simultaneously met and shattered. There are extensive collections recording LGBTI, and walking through these rows of documents and materials of queers past brought the joy that only a historian can feel in an archive. Experiencing this space more deeply than most researchers brought the feeling of returning home that I was searching for in the city. At the same time, I did not anticipate the intracommunal rejection of my nonbinary identity that came on my very first day, when I was introduced around the office with she/her pronouns, and when I corrected the supervisor to he/him, she responded by saying, “That’s fine, as long as it’s not they/them.” This introductory, nonchalant exclusion alerted me immediately that this was not a space for every queer person’s histories, including my own, which contributed to a more cautious approach to the space as my research progressed.

The hope I held by leaning into the construction of a progressive city feels foolish retrospectively. I let my critical guard down, but I stand by the intense craving for a queerer space, one that meets the liberative cravings of marginalized people. It is only in criticizing past and present systems as they exist that we can collectively create futures that offer freedom more tangible than Amsterdam as an imagined space. This project is intended to emphasize a continued hope for the emancipation of queerness in more than just pretense. Moving forward, I hold tightly to a quote by Christopher Castiglia in “Queer Theory is Burning,” stating, “We may have to sex the archive. Ultimately, we need more than memories. We need other lives, different values, and greater possibilities in the present. When memory serves, it helps us create these.”<sup>1</sup> Perhaps despite myself, I still think we can queer our spaces and histories; it is possible to build spaces that are genuinely free.

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed, “Queer Theory is Burning: Sexual Revolution and Traumatic Unremembering,” (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 174.

## INTRODUCTION:

People in the past live on through the stories we know. Whether recalling an encounter with a late loved one or reading a letter written by someone a hundred years before you were born, what is remembered continues the life of those who may no longer otherwise exist. Without some written or spoken record of these stories, there would be no current knowledge of what took place in the past. These records hold memory and are housed in archives. By keeping these memories, archives bridge the gap between past and present, and give life to the stories we remember. Archiving is a process of proclaiming life and existence.

Memory is the conduit through which the past is recreated. Memories are experienced both individually and collectively, and play a significant role in exposing power structures throughout present and past societies. What is known from of history comes from the systems and groups that control archival records and memory through these power structures. By definition, historical memory:

Refers to the ways in which groups, collectivities, and nations construct and identify with particular narratives about historical periods or events. Historical memories are foundational to social and political identities and are also often reshaped in relation to the present historical-political moment.... Memory is reconstructed over generations to fit particular social and political contexts.<sup>3</sup>

Our understanding of the past is inherently restricted, as conceptualizing “truth” is limited by interpretation through historical memory. When particular narratives are given enough platform to be adopted into societal teachings of history, they become publicly remembered, where certain stories are deliberately left out—often excluding marginalized groups and events of state violence. Public memory is constructed to suit specific agendas, presenting the past in ways that these structures want the future to think of the present. This construction, however, is much

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<sup>3</sup> Katherine Hite, “Historical Memory,” (SAGE Publications, 2011), 1078.

larger than the individual. History is social, constructed through current and previous systems have produced and reproduced all-too-familiar narratives. These, in turn, have been reiterated by authority so frequently that they are ingrained and accepted as objective truths. In reality, truth is not neutral, instead being highly shaped by what has been kept under the watchful eye of the archivist. Archives are products of the systems creating depiction of the past—these “truths”—on the terms of people already in power.

Archivists, then, protect knowledge about people whose stories have been kept, and cultivate their memories so that they can be remembered in the future. Memory reinvigorates and gives purpose to the past, making the archivists vital, “Since inclusion in the archive is deemed synonymous with life, exclusion from the archive means death, a death that the archivist is responsible for.”<sup>4</sup> Unnamed people cultivate what we remember of the past, especially which narratives are given clout and which are hidden away. Following this, archivists are the gatekeepers of who lives and dies within public historical memory, turning archives into, “less depositories of documents than themselves historical agents, organized around unwritten logics of inclusion and exclusion, with the power to exalt certain stories, experiences, and events and to bury others.”<sup>5</sup> These constructions are narratives that marginalized people often must overcome from the historical record, in which reclaiming archival space becomes a pull for more accurate representation, in which there is, “a quest for eternal reproduction, a sort of assurance that *only* our archiving desire will preserve a (recognizable) queer time and place in the future. There is no coincidence, then, in the repetition of the symbolic order; there is only a fear of not being

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<sup>4</sup> Sara Edenheim, “Lost and Never Found: The Queer Archive of Feelings and Its Historical Propriety,” (Umeå, Duke University Press, 2014), 53.

<sup>5</sup> Anjali Arondekar, Ann Cvetkovich, Christina B. Hanhardt, Regina Kunzel, Tavia N'yongo, Juana María Rodríguez, and Susan Stryker; “Queering Archives: A Roundtable Discussion,” (Duke University Press, 2015), 214.

remembered ‘as we were.’”<sup>6</sup> Those whose narratives are kept in the archive are given the power to exist, while others are lost in forgetting, impossible to recall again.

In this way, the archive is constructed from subjectivities, discriminations towards what ought to be granted the privileged status of being remembered; anything excluded from these selections is unworthy, unarchivable.<sup>7</sup> Queerness and the dynamic subculture behind it have been predominantly deemed unarchivable. The status and decency of being included within wider historical records has been systemically denied to queer people throughout state archives for centuries, leading queer people to turn within their own communities to protect memory amongst themselves.

It is the collection and preservation of narratives within archives that allow historians to remember past queer experience and identities. If queerness is left out of societal retellings of the past, and there are not archival records to prove its existence, then according to historical memory, it did not exist at all. Queer people and queer experiences have been systemically excluded from state archives, frequently limited to criminal records of sodomy arrests, cross-dressing laws, and gay bar busts. It is in part due to the restrictions imposed by institutional exclusion that LGBT-specific archives began as a form of resistance to homophobic systems; queer folks take matters into their own hands, remembering each other and preserving community stories by creating personal archives for themselves. LGBTQ+ community archives reclaim access to queer narratives, refusing to let these stories fall victim to collective forgetting.

Queer people deserve to have access to their histories. More than this, they deserve to have themselves remembered on their own terms so that all people—queer or not—can learn

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<sup>6</sup> Edenheim, “Lost and Never Found,” 53.

<sup>7</sup> Achille Mbembe, “The Power of the Archive and Its Limits,” (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 20.

more about the value of queer people. This requires a collection of memories, through tangible materials and oral histories, by and for queer people—an endeavor that has taken place in personal spaces for ages. IHLIA LGBT Heritage (referred to in short as IHLIA<sup>8</sup>) is an archive run by LGBT people to focused on international lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex history. Situated in the middle of Amsterdam’s largest public library, right next to Centraal Station at the core of the city, this archive offers research the widest compilation of LGBTI materials in Europe.<sup>9</sup> Between 8 November 2018 and 23 February 2019, this archive expanded their public reach by putting on an exhibit titled *With Pride* to celebrate the collection’s fortieth anniversary and highlight gay activism that has taken place in Amsterdam since the 1970s. In collaboration with outsourced curators and designers, this exhibit was an extension of the archive in a new form, giving higher, more publicly accessible platforms to narratives carefully chosen from the archive. This thesis observes how IHLIA, and now *With Pride*, contributes to national collective understandings of homosexuality both past and present.

IHLIA may be collecting materials and memories of LGBTI people around the world, but these are being presented with primarily heterosexual audiences in mind, minimizing queer material to make it more palatable. IHLIA approaches gay archiving with the same assimilationist approaches that were used during the gay emancipation movement of the Long Sixties, leading to a gay Dutch community in which, “the homo-norm has become not to behave in public like an effeminate fag, a bull-dyke or an erotically explicit queer.”<sup>10</sup> Queerness that disrupts this norm of invisibility is neither accepted in public streets nor allowed in the archive. As stated by a nonbinary intern about full-time IHLIA workers, “formally and definitely

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<sup>8</sup> See Figure 11 in Appendix A.

<sup>9</sup> See Figure 12 in Appendix A.

<sup>10</sup> Gert Hekma and Jan Willem Duyvendak, “Queer Netherlands: A Puzzling Example,” (Amsterdam, SAGE Publications, 2011), 629.

informally, they do prioritize a certain audience that is not queer or identifies outside of a gender binary.”<sup>11</sup> What *With Pride* subliminally shows but fails to address is that gay activism in the Netherlands throughout the past century has turned primarily to methods of *assimilation*, making homosexuality palatable to a straighter public. This assimilationist goal has, for the most part, succeeded, as seen in the Netherlands being the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001. At the same time, these strategies have eradicated platforms for more radical thoughts that would call for the deconstruction of homophobia itself, content enough with the uninterrupted—but disapproving—silences of tolerance.

Throughout this thesis, I will unpack and evidence how the “truths” and memories that IHLIA constructs through its collections and new public exhibits reinforces a decades-long perception of Dutch national identity. The Netherlands is seen as a global leader in progressiveness for lesbian and gay issues, but this image ignores a Dutch reality that conditional cultural citizenship is utilized to favor whiteness and a continuation of cisheterosexual norms. While going through the motions of preserving community-based records, what is selected for public platform centers heterosexuals rather than fulfilling the radical potential that comes with the vital archiving of gay histories.

In community-based archives more than any other, personal significance is used as a method of measuring historical value. Queer archivists frequently acknowledge the significance of caring for materials and memories that revolve around what may be more largely seen as mundane or everyday in addition to document records. Simply “because of its being there, the archive... is proof that a life truly existed, that something actually happened, an account of which can be put together.”<sup>12</sup> These collections indicate what is important to community

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<sup>11</sup> Floris, Interview (Amsterdam, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Mbembe, “The Power of the Archive,” 21.

members, establishing the archive as a site of recording memories and experiences, “a place of safe-keeping, preserving and imagining.... It is the repository, not only of documents and records, artefacts and memorabilia, but the place where all that is important and special and valuable is stored and preserved for posterity.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, community archives rely on heavy community interactions through donations and personal research, giving community members the chance to prove their historical existence on their own terms. In this frame, “the reoccurring emphasis on preservation, authenticity, future research, and hierarchical inclusion (only queer ephemera allowed!) is anything but random or chaotic.”<sup>14</sup> Archives that focus on compiling and celebrating these marginalized identities are vital to defying societal norms and state erasure, as they make space for those who have been neglected in historical narratives.

Queer community archives resist the state narratives, instead making the presence of queerness throughout history visible, accessible, and alive, without the constraints imposed by homophobia.<sup>15</sup> This pattern creates historical records that imply moral wrongness and predatory behavior are inherent to queerness, and establishes a one-sided archival perspective that removes the voice of the homosexual; queer archives stem from the needs of a community to make up for the failures of cisheterosexual societies. To counteract the institutions that curtail and exclude them, “Communities create archives because of a lack of representation in or access to records from their pasts.... marginalized groups distrusted institutional archives after seeing how their lives had been represented or, in some instances, completely omitted.”<sup>16</sup> By deliberately

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<sup>13</sup> Graeme Reid, “History of the Past Is the Trust of the Present: Preservation and Excavation in the Gay and Lesbian Archives of South Africa,” (New York, Hamilton, 2003), 206.

<sup>14</sup> Edenheim, “Lost and Never Found,” 54.

<sup>15</sup> I strongly encourage reading Gina Watts’ “Queer Lives in Archives: Intelligibility & Forms of Memory,” and Sara Edenheim’s “Lost and Found: The Queer Archive of Feelings” to better understand the value and uniqueness of queer archiving.

<sup>16</sup> Diana Wakimoto, Debra Hansen, and Christine Bruce; “The Case of LLACE: Challenges, Triumphs, and Lessons of a Community Archives,” (Society of American Archivists, 2013), 440.

establishing collections that represent LGBTQ+ people from their own perspectives, queer archivists counteract cisheteropatriarchal memory to ensure historical space for queerer truths, built on experience, emotion, community, and fortitude outside of societal acceptance.

These queer truths accommodate immense varieties of queer feelings—traumatic or joyous, large or small—in ways that other archives both do not have the range and do not care to include. Queer archives aim to create space for the full emotional spectrum within queerness, where, “[in] the gay male archive... fatigue, ennui, boredom, indifference, ironic distancing, indirectness, arch dismissal, insincerity, and camp make up what Ann Cvetkovich has called ‘an archive of feelings’... we can identify, for example, rage, rudeness, anger, spite, impatience, intensity, mania, sincerity, earnestness, overinvestment, incivility, and brutal honesty.”<sup>17</sup> The emotional processing of marginalization and violence is documented within a queer archive; this rage, mourning, and trauma exists without having to be palatable to heterosexuals. At the same time, joy and love and hope and celebration sit prominently intermingled in queer records. Queer people have been forged into resilience and cared for each other in their pockets of community; this, too, is protected in a queer archive. Overcoming existing, narrow-sighted historical memory empowers queer pasts.

Whether reproducing or counteracting larger power structures, archives are products of the systems in which they are created. IHLIA LGBT Heritage is no exception. Created as a documentation center in 1978 by gay students from local universities, IHLIA is molded by the mindsets and energies of the 1960s and 70s. Across the globe, sexual liberation movements gained traction and worked alongside various movements fighting against oppressions. A major

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<sup>17</sup> Robert L. Caserio, Lee Edelman, Judith Halberstam, José Esteban Muñoz, and Tim Dean; “The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory,” (Washington DC, Modern Language Association of America, 2006), 824. See Ann Cvetkovich’s *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (2003).

site of this trend was Amsterdam, where the period held a significant turning point for Dutch society, redirecting from pillarized, conservative, religious values towards secularism and projected ideals of tolerance.

The Netherlands has since come to be identified with a sense of liberal tolerance. Alongside legalization, tolerance is an approach to social issues commonly implemented by the Dutch, indicating the lack of policing towards decriminalized but not fully legal activities.<sup>18</sup> In part because the Netherlands was the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001, the Dutch continue to build off of the reputation Amsterdam established during the liberation movements of the 1960s. Dutch tolerance—whether for homosexuality, sex work, soft drugs, or reproductive rights—has become a characteristic of national identity. For the case of homosexuality, public verbal support for gays and lesbians has come to be so ingrained that the country has shifted informal citizenship to require tolerance of gay people, even if that tolerance simultaneously demands invisibility. This extension of cultural citizenship, as in who is considered to be Dutch and performing Dutchness correctly,<sup>19</sup> is enacted alongside homonationalism as a strategy of both regulating population and reinforcing global hierarchies.

Homonationalism is a creation of national identity revolving around an inclusion of homosexual rights, frequently to serve purposes other than the liberation of gay citizens. Through this, gay civil liberties are used [as tools] to further oppressive ideologies such as xenophobia, Islamophobia, and, by coincidental irony, heteronormativity. Homonationalism demands a construction of national identity—and, by extension, informal cultural citizenship—in

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<sup>18</sup> Gert Hekma, “Amsterdam’s Sexual Underground in the 1960s,” (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 53.

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 64 on page 28 for a brief explanation of the Dutch constructions of “Doe normaal,” and footnote 81 on page 34 for the linguistic duality of Dutch ethnicity through the terms “autochtoon” versus “allochtoon.” Cultural citizenship as a concept and method of strategic ex/inclusion will be further unpacked in the ‘Homonationalism’ chapter.

which support for gays and lesbians is a required characteristic of what it means to be Dutch. On the surface, this appears positive and progressive, but upon further examination, this support for homosexuality is not only conditional, but exists as a method of enacting capitalism and Islamophobia. Dutch historical memory has only recently expanded to include gay citizens, but even still, the narrative of tolerance is only applied to gays who meet heterosexual standards of acceptability: undisruptive, invisible, and white.

Intentionally or not, IHLIA plays a role in upholding homonationalism—a term coined by Jasbir Puar<sup>20</sup> to articulate a construction of national identity revolving around an inclusion of homosexual rights, frequently to serve purposes other than the liberation of gay citizens—in Dutch society. A recent unexplained increase in funding from the Dutch federal government, with the condition that the archive focuses on gay emancipation narratives, implies that IHLIA is used by the government to further evidence the Netherlands' reputation for progressiveness and tolerance; this money indicates external, heterosexual controls over the archive that narrow the range of encouraged collections. Dependent upon funding—and, by extension, the satisfaction of straight people who determine federal grants—to maintain the current status of the archive, IHLIA is not deconstructing homophobic systems through the material it chooses to highlight to larger publics.

This has been clearly evidenced in *With Pride*, where primarily cis, white, already-normalized histories are displayed to appeal to straighter publics. IHLIA archivists and outsourced curators did not use their platform to move liberation for LGBTQ+ people forward, but instead chose to present already-familiar narratives to continue goals of assimilation and increase the number of visitors. Especially with such a high platform in the Amsterdam central

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<sup>20</sup> See Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007).

library, “In relation to the call for a queer archive, it becomes essential to discuss for whom we are expected to narrate our feelings and experiences, for whom we should make sense of these feelings and experiences, for whom the archive of feelings should transfer its content.”<sup>21</sup> If queer history is filtered for straight populations even by gay archivists, then queerness itself is deemed unworthy of being fully remembered in history.

IHLIA is also decentering the needs and identities of people within the communities that it claims to support. Trans people, in particular, are only validated by these archivists and archival collections if their gender experience is binary and follows a medical transition that alters their body to fit cis beauty and gender standards. Terms such as nonbinary and even queer as an umbrella term have been rejected by IHLIA staff members, leaving many archivists defensive when they repeatedly get criticism that their exhibits are too white and binary.<sup>22</sup> An archive advertised for LGBTI people is not a site where queer people of any kind should feel rejected or dismissed, yet people of color are repeatedly left underrepresented and nonbinary people are aggressively pushed out of the archive. While still disappointing, these realities become less surprising when it is better understood that IHLIA is a product of the Dutch society from which it rises.

## METHODOLOGY:

This project was initially going to attempt to assess IHLIA’s functional structure as a whole to assess how power—and thus, by extension, historical memory—is constructed within this particular archive. Throughout my research, I used a combination of historical and ethnographic methods to holistically observe archival processing (such as

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<sup>21</sup> Edenheim, “Lost and Never Found,” 45.

<sup>22</sup> Floris, Interview.

accessioning/deaccessioning, cataloguing, and inventory work), spatial organization of collections, and content accessibility. The hope was to work with archival materials directly and interviewing IHLIA workers, to determine what is in the archive (including material types, whether exclusively documents or including wider artifacts such as photographs, film, or clothing), who it is created by and for, each piece's purpose in the collection, and the influence of finances.

Upon beginning research, I came to understand that the collections housed at IHLIA are much more expansive than I originally anticipated, and the time I had available would not be sufficient to address the subjects and analysis to the extent I had originally planned. Then, by coincidence and great timing, I was informed of an exhibit opening the first week of my internship that was being put on by IHLIA in celebration of the archive's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This exhibit, *With Pride*, came to be the site of my research focus within IHLIA, as it is an exemplary embodiment of the way archives contribute to public memory of queer history.

The deliberate selections that come with curating exhibits in *With Pride* are calculated representations of the wider archive, allowing the exhibit to function as a case study of archivist bias within the case study of IHLIA as an LGBT archive. This will allow me to still explore the significant role of archives in constructing historical memory, as well as the construction of archives as sites of memory themselves, but these topics are contextualized through the deliberate publicizing of archival material through a more commonly museum platform.

This research is presented through the lens of an internship with IHLIA LGBT Heritage. Doing research as a temporary staff member allows for participatory insight to archival process and organization, as well as inherently establishing time to analyze content from a more informed, internal perspective than the average researcher. The tasks done as an intern for IHLIA

has been telling of what projects are a priority to the center and division of labor between archivists, registrars, and volunteers.

The tasks specifically assigned to me as an intern surround a recently-launched online international platform in which people from around the world can drop a pin on a map, adding information and photos of gay bars that they have been to/frequented/owned. This platform was created to identify historical significance of gay bars as sites of community-building and activism, and connect people across borders in research and/or personal interest. This also digitizes the materials from each bar so that they are more permanently recorded and publicly available. IHLIA is working to collect memorabilia (coasters, menus, posters, etc), backgrounds, and historical narratives of gay bars throughout the Netherlands to pin themselves. My role was to correct and further available information for them. Currently, all descriptions of bars are in English, but are not necessarily correct in the eyes of native English speakers, since they were translated from Dutch. My task was to edit any translation errors, ensure the materials are organized as efficiently and accessibly as possible, and upload bar information/memorabilia for the site. Retrieving this information involved going to the ten Amsterdam bars other staff members have not yet had the chance to visit, and talking with any willing bartenders and available owners about the history of the location (and for my own research, their previous understandings of and interactions with IHLIA). Any physical materials collected were or will be added to the IHLIA collections, as well as the digitizing site that keeps the information publicly accessible.

This internship allowed me to go into the collections and get to know the archivists in ways that most researchers do not get to experience. Archivists' role not only establishes the internal structure of the archive, but also manages local queer history's current connection to the

public through potential curatorial and research projects; building relationships with IHLIA staff members gave insight to the goals and complications of the archives, so having this intern role made this project possible.

Separate from my assigned tasks, my research revolved primarily around ethnographic interviews and exhibition content analysis. When access and logistic complications arose to the point that an interview was not able to be conducted in person, questions and consent forms were sent over email. With IHLIA managers, I expanded conversation to address the archive's history, existing collections, ongoing projects, outreach goals, funding sources, and the *With Pride* exhibit.

The interviews have been the most telling part of the research collection process. The two IHLIA staff members who were directly involved in the creation of *With Pride* recommended I reach out to the exhibit curators from Van Gisteren to have my questions about the reasoning behind the focus on certain objects and subjects in *With Pride* better addressed. Unfortunately, I was unable to get their input, as they did not respond to my requests for an interview. They went on holiday immediately after the exhibit opened after seeing their months of dedicated work paying off. Similarly, one of the exhibit designers from Vandejong responded to my request with interest, but did not respond beyond that point.

Their insight would have been extremely beneficial, since their intentional decisions actively created the content of the exhibit. In the future, I hope to continue this project to fill the gaps left by gaining a curatorial perspective, as they seem to be the missing piece in determining the extent of whose voices are included within *With Pride* and the larger public memory stemming from it. However, the people I spoke with were well-versed in overarching goals of

the exhibit and details of collaboration between curators and archivists, even though they were not able to answer “why” to selection details on curators’ behalf.

In terms of analyzing the *With Pride* exhibit itself, my biggest issues came with my inability to read Dutch. All of the information available throughout the exhibit was written in Dutch, and while I could pick out familiar words and phrases enough to understand main ideas, I was almost entirely reliant upon IHLIA coworkers and Google Translate to make out details. Translation inherently further contributes interpretation since there is usually no precise lingual exchange.<sup>36</sup> Google Translate, while a helpful guide, is insufficient for a translation of idea rather than literal words. All of this led me to rely my analysis heavily on the visuals offered throughout the exhibit—contributing to a frustration expressed by multiple IHLIA staff members about how even the text presented left out so much of the stories.

Throughout this work, “gay” and “queer” are not used as interchangeable descriptors. Any use of these words is calculated, bringing attention to the fact that same-sex and same-gender attraction can exist while simultaneously upholding oppressive, homophobic structures. To be gay and to be complicit in violent structures are not mutually exclusive. I differentiate this gayness from queerness by recognizing the history of the word “queer” as a deliberately radical reclamation of power from a slur, ascribing this radicalism as an umbrella term to sexual and gender identities and behaviors that actively subvert known marginalizing systems. By extension, “liberal” and “radical” are used in their respective intra- and extra-structural definitions of approaches to systemic issues, rather than a political conservative-versus-liberal discourse. Queer is an umbrella term including sexual, romantic, and gender minorities that both

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<sup>36</sup> The same hurdle applied during secondary source research, hindering some access to non-English scholarship on gay/queer history in the Netherlands.

fall outside of and radically confront cisheteronorms. “Queer” includes identities that are not easily or possibly categorized within binaries.

To be clear, to openly identify with and publicly express one’s sexuality is to inherently defy the homophobia of global societies. In this way, one can be gay and queer (read: radical), or gay and not (read: liberal). However, establishing something as gay rather than queer exemplifies my own commentary on the extent of radical engagement with structural change.<sup>37</sup> As summarized by Konstantinos Eleftheriadis, “Queer has historically and politically been built as an opposition, as a counter-hegemonic discourse and practice, against more institutional-oriented LGBT movements, but also against a public space regulated by hetero/homonormativity, commercialization and racism.”<sup>38</sup> I describe IHLIA as a gay or LGBTI archive because, while it centers non-heterosexual and, to a lesser extent, non-cisgender people and identities, it reproduces structural power—thus detaching from my definition of “queer”. This includes a clarification of separation between gay and trans identities; while both identities can exist at the same time, and either can reproduce binaries created by cishetero society. “Gay” also does not include bisexuality, though same-gender sexual and romantic attractions falls under the queer category. There is discourse within the intersex community on whether or not they want to be involved in the queer community, as intersex experience relates to different embodiments of

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<sup>37</sup> Some resources expanding differentiations between queer and gay politics include: Amy Brandzel’s chapters, “Intersectionalities Lost and Found: Same-Sex Marriage Law and the Monstrosities of Alliance” in *Against Citizenship: The Violence of the Normative*; Cathy Cohen’s “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens”; Joan Wallach Scott’s “The Vexed Relationship of Emancipation and Equality”; Sarah Keenan’s “It Gets Worse: The Queer Feminist Case Against Inclusion”; Konstantinos Eleftheriadis’ chapters, “Not Yet Queer Enough’: Constructing Identity through Culture” and “Anti-Identity, Politics, and the State: Queer Challenges and Future Directions,” in *Queer Festivals*; Jasbir K. Puar’s “Queer Times, Queer Assemblages”; and Yasmin Nair’s “Gay Marriage IS A Conservative Clause.”

<sup>38</sup> Konstantinos Eleftheriadis, *Queer Festivals*, (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 167.

gender and sex structures, though “queer” is available for intersex people to identify with if they so choose.

My clarification between gay and queer emphasizes the thought that language for English-speakers does not and cannot fully incorporate or articulate queer experience. Dutch, in slight contrast, has the option of combining multiple known words to create new ones with different meaning, though this is still limited to communicated understanding and is not able to be practiced with reckless abandon. Discourse about same-gender experience is restricted by the limits of language. Establishing my own use of vocabulary throughout this piece is important for emphasizing the sociality of linguistics as its own discourse, built and shaped by the same social power systems that incorporate themselves through historical memory.

## HISTORY OF THE DUTCH GAY MOVEMENT:

While founded in 1978, IHLIA has its roots in the revolutionary spirit of the Long Sixties. The period initiated a restructuring of Dutch political and social life, which later helped [give platform to/activists gain legal traction for] movements such as sexual liberation,<sup>39</sup> gay rights, and feminism. From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1960s, Dutch society was organized into four main categories, segregating religious and political subjects into pillars that shaped governing and social spheres. Stemming from Calvinist ideology, pillarized public structures differentiated authority to Catholics, orthodox Protestants, liberals, and socialists.<sup>40</sup> Communities were separated into categories which then established political parties centering the values of those groups, where “by absorbing the entire social personality, the parties practically

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<sup>39</sup> To read more about the sexual revolution and its tandem impact with the gay emancipation movement in the Netherlands, see Gert Hekma’s chapter, “Amsterdam’s Sexual Underground in the 1960s” in *Paris-Amsterdam Underground: Essays on Cultural Resistance, Subversion, and Diversion* and Rob Tielman’s “Dutch Gay Emancipation History (1911-1986).”

<sup>40</sup> Hekma, “Amsterdam’s Sexual Underground,” 50.

succeed in formulating an obligation to vote.”<sup>41</sup> Doing so ensured loyalty and power to affiliated parties, as they segregated every aspect of Dutch life to the point that cross-pillar overlap was nearly impossible.

Leaning upon hierarchies and moral standards already existing within the Church, the Catholic pillar was more organized and politically powerful than its counterparts. Secular political pillars tended to be more progressive than their Christian counterparts, and since “the confessional parties obtained (more than) half of the parliamentary seats, allowing them to easily block progressive policies on moral issues”<sup>42</sup> until they were unseated in 1963. Policies and social order were especially monitored through Catholic control of the Ministries of Education, Justice, and Interior Affairs.<sup>43</sup> Throughout this period, “The Netherlands had been one of the more conservative countries of Western Europe where Christian parties set norms and laws.”<sup>44</sup> Conservative legislative representatives held control over (im)moral issues, such as sex work, drugs, reproductive rights, and homosexuality.

Following the mid-1960s, the disintegration of pillars led to the individualizing and secularizing of social, political, and religious activities. The breakdown of popularity and power for Christianity initiated norms of secularism throughout the Netherlands. Over the following two decades, affiliation with religious institutions dropped drastically, falling as far as, “from 80 percent in 1967 to 46 percent in 1989, and church attendance dropped dramatically from 90 percent in 1960 to 26 percent in 1986,”<sup>45</sup> severely weakening the control Christian parties held over parliament and sociopolitical systems. Many laws initiated before the breakdown of the

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<sup>41</sup> Rudolf Steininger, “Pillarization (verzillug) and Political Parties,” (1977), 251.

<sup>42</sup> Judith Schuyf and André Krouwel; “The Dutch Lesbian and Gay Movement: The Politics of Accommodation,” (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1999), 160.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

<sup>44</sup> Hekma, “Amsterdam’s Sexual Underground,” 49.

<sup>45</sup> Schuyf, “The Dutch Lesbian and Gay Movement,” 160.

pillar structure stayed in place for a few more decades, however, including one directly discriminating against same-sex interactions. In 1911, Christian parties implemented restrictions such as, “sex laws that criminalized abortion, pornography, and pimping, and created a higher age of consent for homosexual relations than for heterosexual relations (21 versus 16 years, in Article 248bis).”<sup>46</sup> More than the surface-level constraint on same-sex interactions for people under 21, this law furthered public conflation of homosexuality with pedophilia. Gay social and activist spaces were treated as predatory, and the law became a chance for the regulation and policing of gay assembly for the sake of protecting youth from homosexuality. Article 248bis restricted the opportunities young men had to explore their sexualities, the extent to which gay organizations could assist gay youths kicked out of their homes, and the age of patrons gay bars could have.

The first gay rights organization, Nederlandsch Humanitair Wetenschappelijk Komitee (Dutch Humanitarian Scientific Committee, NWHK), was founded in 1912 in direct response and in opposition to the law. The group deliberately worked for legal equality of and public education about homosexuals. While their Rotterdam branch was forced to close under Article 248bis, the NWHK as a whole was shut down at the beginning of the German occupation in 1940, where many of the records and research on gay history conducted by NWHK founder Jacob Anton Schorer were destroyed.<sup>47</sup> Immediately following World War II,<sup>48</sup> a new group came to the forefront of gay rights in the Netherlands: Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum (Center for Culture and Recreation, COC). They came to be the largest gay association in the

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<sup>46</sup> Hekma, “Amsterdam’s Sexual Underground,”50.

<sup>47</sup> “Schorerbibliotheek,” (Amsterdam, IHLIA LGBT Heritage, 2018).

<sup>48</sup> Queer people were also targeted and killed under the Nazi regime. Amsterdam houses a monument addressing the oppression gay and lesbian people have experienced for their sexuality. Constructed in 1987, the homomonument is shaped with the pink triangle that gay men were assigned in Nazi concentration camps.

Netherlands, eventually growing to 10,000 members, circulating a national weekly with 20,000 copies and organizing an annual gay parade (the Pink Front).<sup>49</sup> In their efforts to stay an existing organization and not meet a similar fate to the NWHK, the COC had to be incredibly careful to monitor the ages of members, since under Article 248bis, any engagement with an underage person would be grounds for shutting down the organization. Over time, the group's work towards assimilation and tolerance in Dutch society came to be vital to the change of both legal status and public opinion of homosexuality.<sup>50</sup>

Public opinion on homosexuality began to change in the late 1950s, though Article 248bis was not overturned until 1971. This came in large part to changes in social dynamics between gay men and their sexual partners. Up to that point, dominant understanding of sexuality was rooted in gender expression and penetrated/penetrator sexual role; even in same-sex activities, opposites attracted in pairings between effeminate queens and 'straight' masculine men, butches and femmes. Furthermore, gender expression indicated sexual role mirroring heterosexual interactions, where, "Sexual roles were clearly separated in unofficial ideology: real 'straight' men had 'active' (fucker, sucked) and 'unmasculine' gay men 'passive' roles (fucked, sucker). This terminology had less to do with what gay or straight and active or passive meant but more with what was seen as disgusting in terms of transgression of gender roles."<sup>51</sup> Men who performed their masculinity in a visible and dominant way maintained the privilege of heterosexuality, while their effeminate counterparts much more commonly experienced the criminalization—frequently because their role 'replacing' a woman allowed queens to be sex

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<sup>49</sup> Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Marco G. Giugni. "Gay Subcultures between Movement and Market" (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 173.

<sup>50</sup> Gert Hekma, "Queer Amsterdam 1945-2010," (London, Bloomsbury, 2014), 116.

<sup>51</sup> Hekma, "Queer Amsterdam," 111.

workers that were more affordable for straight men.<sup>52</sup> Homosexuality, then, was not defined exclusively by participation in sex with someone of the same gender, but rather the performance of them, in which submission and feminine presentation created the image of the gay man.<sup>53</sup>

At the end of the decade, however, came a rapid change in gender and sexual norms for queer men, deliberately cutting out the roles of feminine expression and heterosexual men entirely in favor of a new, gay, mutual masculinity. Here came, “a new generation from the late 1950s onwards who saw queens as relics of a repressive past.... most importantly, there emerged on the scene new ‘masculine’ gay men who were interested sexually in each other and no longer searched for heteros.”<sup>54</sup> Through these changes, relationships between gay men began to look less like public sex work and more like private, equal relationships resembling marriage. In turn, gay men:

rose in status from whorish to marriageable and respectable. This change in perception strongly influenced psychiatrists who compared homosexuality in the early 1950s with sex-work and shit (referring to anal sex) and thought sissies seduced boys into homosexual pleasures. A decade later, exactly the same people had changed over to ideas of homophile identities and ‘fixed friendships’ – with sex, boys and money left out.<sup>55</sup>

This became a vital characteristic to the normalization of Dutch homosexuality, as the change in psychiatric views of gay populations instigated their eventual accommodation into other Dutch institutions. Religious professionals’ transition into more open-minded approaches to morality contributed strongly to the further breakdown of pillarization and an expansion of sexual permissiveness within Dutch society.

While homophobic laws were put in place by conservative Christian political parties, it

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<sup>52</sup> Hekma, “Queer Amsterdam,” 111.

<sup>53</sup> Defining sexuality along these terms is not unique to Dutch society, but follows a Western pattern that began to change in the decades following World War II.

<sup>54</sup> Hekma, “Queer Amsterdam,” 113.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 113

was ironically Catholic and Protestant psychiatrists in the 1950s who came to alter legal, religious, and medical institutional perspectives of homosexuality. By meeting and speaking with queer people, they constructed new explanations for homosexuality, restructuring their paradigms from a preventable, perverted disease to an unchangeable sexuality; upon this realization, these psychiatrists, then, influenced clergy to accept homosexuals in a very ‘hate the sin but not the sinner’ approach—a welcome change in comparison to previous criminalization and pedophilic associations.<sup>56</sup> Homosexuality stopped being listed as a mental disorder in the Netherlands in 1973, fourteen years before the United States.<sup>57</sup>

At its core, this was not an acceptance of sexuality between people of the same genders, but a contentment with its invisibility. Though gay gender expressions previously mirrored heterosexuality, the masculine/queen dichotomy was unacceptable because it was both blatantly sexual and very visible. Once the immorality of homosex was made less outwardly subversive, homosexuality was deemed more palatable—thus, tolerable—to the hetero-public. This tolerance differs from social acceptance and instead is more similar to decriminalization in the ways that “the state did not prosecute those who engaged in officially forbidden acts – a typically Dutch way to deal with controversial topics.”<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, a transition into sexuality as a private occurrence rather than public act turned gay life towards invisibility and intracommunity growth, creating underground spaces that cultivated further room for independent expression and activism.

Where previously sexual interactions took place in open street spaces such as public

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<sup>56</sup> Hekma, “Queer Amsterdam,” 115.

<sup>57</sup> “Timeline Dutch Lgbti History,” (Amsterdam, IHLIA LGBT Heritage, 2018). Neel Burton, “When Homosexuality Stopped Being a Mental Disorder,” (Psychology Today, 2015).

<sup>58</sup> Hekma, “Amsterdam’s Sexual Underground,” 53.

urinals or truck stops, throughout the Sixties a gay subculture grew in bars and bath houses.<sup>59</sup> Police attempts to bust gay bars continually relied on the older construction of gender, where gay men were feminine and lesbian women were masculine, to the extent that bartenders and owners, “saw to it that clients didn’t do anything reproachable (same-sex kissing, intimacy or dancing most obviously),” so that their locations would not get shut down.<sup>60</sup> This self-discipline is mirrored in the activism of gay rights organizations—most prominently the COC—and the assimilationist approaches they decided to enact in their search for legal legitimacy.

The COC was a major player in transforming public opinion about homosexuality. Still existing to this day, the COC’s activism has focused on legal rights and education over ideals of a more radical queer liberation. In Dutch gay activism, the white, middle class heterosexual has consistently been the center of appeal. Even while gay social and sexual spaces were popping up throughout the 1960s, activist efforts enacted methods of assimilation<sup>61</sup>—idealizing “a decent life for homosexuals according to bourgeois standards and curbing promiscuity.”<sup>62</sup> Since the movement’s inception, liberal strategies and human rights discourses were used to engage heterosexuals, to the extent that social and personal expressions were “characterized by a strong orientation toward official authorities.”<sup>63</sup> Gay society overwhelmingly sought to fit into the category of ‘normal’<sup>64</sup>; rather than instigating criticisms towards and activism against oppressive

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<sup>59</sup> The creation of a gay subculture during this period initiated for the first time a flocking of gay tourists to Amsterdam—to the dismay but eventual financial benefit of government officials. Over time, this led to a pinkwashing of the city, where it is now advertised as a gay capital of the world, commodifying sexuality for the financial exploitation of queer folks across the globe.

<sup>60</sup> Hekma, “Queer Amsterdam,” 111.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Mepschen, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Evelien H. Tonkens; “Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands,” (Amherst, SAGE Publications, 2010), 971.

<sup>62</sup> Schuyf, “The Dutch Lesbian and Gay Movement,” 163.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

<sup>64</sup> “Doe normaal” is a Dutch phrase commonly used to shame anyone who is drawing attention to themselves by transgressing acceptable behavior by being too loud, weird, rude, ‘foreign,’ etc. It indicates not fitting in, by roughly translating to, “just be normal already.”

systems, this ‘emancipation’ movement was really a legalization effort.

Any attempts by smaller radical gay groups to step outside of the limits of normality to establish space for difference were actually squashed by the COC itself. They could not completely muffle the smaller groups, however, as they put on the first public homosexual demonstration in 1969 and continued beyond that to pressure the COC to take more structural approaches. In the attempts to maintain its respectability while the organization was applying for legal status (a process that was denied between initial applications in 1961 until a left-wing administration finally approved the group in 1973), the COC began by “[distancing] itself from these confrontational politics and public manifestations of homosexuality. Its leaders thought it wise not to oppose the authorities; instead, they sought (financial) support and facilitation from local and national governments.”<sup>65</sup> Respectability politics and heterosexual comfort were, to the COC, more important than gay solidarity.

While the COC was pushed into a more left-wing direction by these groups after 1974, the organization benefitted from their attempts to silence their more unruly counterparts. The Dutch federal government began funding them in the middle of the 1960s. Since the group was not formally granted legal status until 1973, and could not be federally subsidized until that time, the Ministry of Welfare was convinced in 1968 to provide counseling to homosexuals through funding of the Schorer Foundation.<sup>66</sup> This access to psychological care initiated vital contributions to public opinion about homosexuality. However, later and more direct funding of the COC restricted the mobility and still-liberative potential of the movement. As comes to be the case with many non-profit organizations,<sup>67</sup> “most of the stipulations for government grants

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<sup>65</sup> Schuyf, “The Dutch Lesbian and Gay Movement,” 164.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>67</sup> See *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex* by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence.

force the applicants into a social and political straightjacket; cultural diversity is not encouraged, and political passivity is rewarded.”<sup>68</sup> The dichotomy between sedated formal and public informal groups emphasized a reality where the only tolerated homosexuals in Dutch society were subtle ones who do not disrupt public norms; even with an increasing in visibility and normalization of homosexuality, gay intracommunity gatekeeping reinforced conformity and transitioned the gay community into back rooms and closets. This conformity successfully contributed to the integration of homosexuality into Dutch society, but simultaneously established a new level of invisibility for queer people and experiences. The gay emancipation movement met its overwhelmingly assimilationist goals, establishing lesbians and gay men as “tolerated” in Dutch society, but this movement stunted more radical, queer liberation.

Beyond the overturning of Article 248bis in 1971, many of the legal equality efforts enacted in the 1960s and 70s didn’t come to fruition until years later. The year 1992 became a real turning point of equal legal treatment, altering most antidiscriminatory policies to include sexual orientation. This solidified in 1994 with the Equal Treatment Law, forbidding, “any distinction in labor contracts, in the professions, in the provision of goods and services, and in advice on education or occupation, although it does not stipulate any sanctions to violators.”<sup>69</sup> While the Netherlands is most celebrated for in terms of progressive equalities, “The decline of Amsterdam as a gay capital set in at the moment most people saw as the high point of emancipation: the opening of marriage to same-sex couples... Both homo- and heterosexuals had the idea that this meant the end of the gay movement.”<sup>70</sup> The sexual revolution and the resulting

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<sup>68</sup> Schuyf, “The Dutch Lesbian and Gay Movement,” 169.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>70</sup> Hekma, “Queer Amsterdam,” 118. To read more about how the nuanced preoccupations with same-sex marriage has limited the radicalism of many international gay movements, see Amy Brandzel’s chapter, “Intersectionalities Lost and Found: Same-Sex Marriage Law and the Monstrosities of Alliance,” in *Against Citizenship: The Violence of the Normative*, and Jens Rydström’s chapter, “Is marriage what we

increase in legal rights for women and gay people casts a convoluted shadow over modern Dutch society. Today, many Dutch folks, “deplore the so-called individualism or excessive freedoms of those years and argue that they have had a negative influence on present-day Holland,”<sup>71</sup> while simultaneously consider tolerance for sexual and gender freedoms as a primary characteristic of present culture in the Netherlands. Though tolerance for homosexuality is now ascribed by straight society as a non-issue on a national scale, interview sources indicated that many Dutch people outside of urban spaces believe that these freedoms only exist or are found in Amsterdam.<sup>72</sup> This moment created the idea that there was nowhere forward to go except maintaining a paternalist protection of gays, despite underlying problems in the construction of Dutch tolerance. Since this legal moment, a national identity has developed that has simultaneously put gay reformist efforts at a standstill and white heterosexual society on a high horse.

## HOMONATIONALISM:

Dutch self-perception as a country of tolerance and progressiveness following the legalization of gay identity and marriage falls under the scope of homonationalism. Homonationalism demands a construction of national identity—and, by extension, informal cultural citizenship—in which support for gays and lesbians is a required characteristic of what it means to be Dutch (and, increasingly, more widely Western European). On the surface, this appears positive and progressive, but upon further digging, this support for homosexuality is not only conditional, but exists as a method of enacting xenophobia and Islamophobia.<sup>73</sup>

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want?” in *Odd Couples: A History of Gay Marriage in Scandinavia*.

<sup>71</sup> Hekma, “Amsterdam’s Sexual Underground,” 60.

<sup>72</sup> Amalia, Interview, (Amsterdam, 2018).

<sup>73</sup> Gert Hekma and Jan Willem Duyvendak, “Queer Netherlands: A Puzzling Example,” (Amsterdam, SAGE Publications, 2011), 627.

Western modernity has co-opted the homosexual as a symbol of the success of a nation. Homonationalism stems from a construction of European exceptionalism, in which the so-called, “‘Pink Agenda’ can be used as a yardstick in order to measure the progress of other states... in the context of the protection of the rights of LGBT persons,”<sup>74</sup> enforcing a hierarchy of ‘progressiveness’ between global countries that utilizes Eurocentric ideals to gauge modernity—though it was European colonialism that brought structures of homophobia to colonized spaces.<sup>75</sup> Employing paternalistic language, “The gay and lesbian human rights industry continues to proliferate Euro-American constructs of identity (not to mention the notion of a sexual identity itself) that privilege identity politics, ‘coming out,’ public visibility, and legislative measures as the dominant barometers of social progress.”<sup>76</sup> More specifically, the legalization of homosexuality differentiates the West from a safe haven for homosexuals in contrast to the Global South, particularly Muslim countries and the people within them. Within a wider neoliberal and global capitalist context, liberal white Europeans use a measure of its own creation to set the parameters for morality, acting as both the winner and omnipotent judge to indicate itself as the global ideal.

Due to its early legalization of homosexual protections, the Netherlands—specifically Amsterdam—heralds itself as a gay utopia, a liberal haven open to all because of its legalization of sex work, marijuana, and gay marriage; this image is further glorified by those in the United States who experience the severe contrast of staunch conservatism raging through national narrative and legislation. That idealistic balloon is quickly popped by deep-rooted conservatism underneath this surface image.

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<sup>74</sup> Francesca Romana Ammaturo, “The ‘Pink Agenda’: Questioning and Challenging Homonationalist Sexual Citizenship,” (SAGE Publications, 2015), 1153.

<sup>75</sup> Val Kalende, “Africa: Homophobia Is a Legacy of Colonialism,” (The Guardian, 2014).

<sup>76</sup> Jasbin Puar, “Rethinking Homonationalism” (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013), 338.

In the social norms beyond legalities, progressive Dutch utopia is no more than a mirage. The potential and practiced sexual mobility within the 1960s and 70s are acts of the past, leaving those decades commodified in global memory. At best, homonationalism affords gay and lesbian citizens legalities such as marriage that allow them to pass within heterosexual society; at worst, it is a performative cooptation of progressiveness for the deepening of both homophobia and other forms of oppression. While homosexuality has reached a point of being 'normal' in Amsterdam's global image, "Contemporary extensions of citizenship... do not directly question the assumed containment of homosexuality. This points to a social context in which liberal and progressive heterosexuals can denounce over discrimination while harbouring unspoken assumptions that theirs may nonetheless be a normatively superior way of life."<sup>77</sup> Societal and legal changes, while comforting, have not eradicated homophobia, seen in polls where, "though up to 95 per cent of Dutch people claim in surveys that they accept homosexuals, 42 per cent report that they dislike seeing two men kissing in the street (precisely the image used in the documentary *Naar Nederland* for the immigration test)."<sup>78</sup> Claims of tolerance throughout the Netherlands have done little to alter homophobia on a deeper public level, beyond strategically expanding the definitions of Dutch cultural citizenship.

For the cis, white, middle class gay, however, this creation of tolerance fulfills its role, because their lives are, for the most part, now privileged under legal protections, unaffected by these homophobic roots as long as they continue to be publicly 'normal' and invisible. After all, "*Utopias* afford consolation: although they offer no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic,

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<sup>77</sup> Matthew Waites, "The Fixity of Sexual Identities in the Public Sphere: Biomedical Knowledge, Liberalism and the Heterosexual/Homosexual Binary in Late Modernity," (Glasgow, SAGE Publications, 2005), 559.

<sup>78</sup> Hekma, "Queer Netherlands," 626.

untroubled region in which they are able to unfold” (emphasis original).<sup>79</sup> While minority socio-sexual groups are created around “an impermeable heterosexual/ homosexual binary.... Liberal pluralist multiculturalism therefore embodies no more than an *ethos* of tolerance, offering rights and formal equality to marginalized communities because it is believed possible to do so without undermining mainstream ways of living”<sup>80</sup> (emphasis mine). By invoking and appropriating language of tolerance to construct the Netherlands as a leading “gay friendly” European utopia, the Dutch government and social sphere is able to evade accountability for equality, and shift blame for underlying homophobia onto an increasingly prevalent undesirable—Muslim immigrants.

The leading trait of Dutch (though also wider European) cultural citizenship is whiteness. While immigration is contributing to growing multiculturalism throughout Amsterdam, notions of acceptability come first and foremost with following the unspoken rules of normality and fitting in. Skin color is an immediate indicator of difference, visible against the unspoken Dutch prerequisite of whiteness,<sup>81</sup> more individually, personal expressions of religion and culture such as a hijab or burka separate Muslim people from secular perceptions of the country. These are considered foreign and unassimilationist, thus disruptive to the highly-valued subtleties of normality. Furthermore, this notion of difference builds off “an Orientalist version of Muslim male sexuality,”<sup>82</sup> as brownness and Islam—specifically embodied by Middle Eastern and North

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<sup>79</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York, Vintage Books, 1970), xvii.

<sup>80</sup> Waites, “The Fixity of Sexual Identities,” 557.

<sup>81</sup> To learn about Dutch differentiation of ethnic nativeness—embodied through the stigmatizing, now-banned terms of “allochtoon” (immigrants, “of another soil”) and “autochtoon” (ethnic Dutch)—see *The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe* by Peter Geschiere, “Pitfalls of top-down identity designation: Ethno-statistics in the Netherlands” by Frank De Zwart, and “Adviesraad overheid stopt met termen allochtoon en autochtoon.”

<sup>82</sup> Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2007), xxv.

African immigrants—are associated with conservatism that threatens the carefully-cultivated image of tolerance. As a political indicator, “sexual liberation is used to frame Europe as the ‘avatar of both freedom and modernity’<sup>83</sup> while depicting Muslim citizens as backward and homophobic.”<sup>84</sup> This has grown uncoincidentally parallel to an increase in terrorism scares and Muslim refugee presence throughout Europe, turning many white Europeans to more tightly grasp their nationalist ideologies and citizenship regulations.<sup>85</sup>

Xenophobic and Islamophobic rhetoric assumption that anti-gay policies of original countries will be brought to the Netherlands through Muslim immigrants. In this way, homoprotectionism is invoked to secure these attitudes, under the implication that gays—now cultural citizens—will be directly harmed under the presence of Islam. This translates into an “Islam versus homosexuality” binary that “reveal[s] the contiguous undercurrents of conservative homonormative ideologies and queer liberalism.”<sup>86</sup> That is, a dichotomy between either gay or Muslim is created in which homosexuality is politicized not for queer liberation, but as a weapon against Islam and immigration from the countries decidedly not friendly enough toward gays in their legislation. Not only is this a false dichotomy, undermined intrinsically by the existence of queer Muslims and the support many experience from their religious communities, but this strategically gains the Netherlands power in the hierarchies which measure modernity based on homosexual legislation, while circulating fear about groups of people who

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<sup>83</sup> Judith Butler, “Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time,” (Berkeley, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2008), 2.

<sup>84</sup> Mepschen, “Sexual Politics,” 963.

<sup>85</sup> For more on societal dynamics of immigration and homosexuality in the Netherlands (but particularly Amsterdam), turn to Paul Mepschen’s “Sexual Democracy, Cultural Alterity and the Politics of Everyday Life in Amsterdam”; Paul Mepschen, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Evelien H. Tonkens’ “Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands”; Gert Hekma and Jan Willem Duyvendak’s “Queer Netherlands: A Puzzling Example”; and Sarah Bracke’s “From ‘Saving Women’ to ‘Saving Gays’: Rescue Narratives and their Dis/continuities.”

<sup>86</sup> Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 19.

are working to make lives for themselves in a culturally hostile place.

The secular white Dutch emphasize what they want to see of multiculturalism, and step into the language of homoprotectors only when it is beneficial to the maintenance of existing systems. Creation of a Muslim/gay binary on both individual and international scales has contributed to the rise of a conservative right-wing politic that is becoming increasingly gay. Implementing rhetoric of maintaining ethnic Dutchness—now including homosexuality—the guise of tolerance becomes an ironic reminder that “Nationalism is the most powerful form of identity politics.”<sup>87</sup> Nationalism is gaining traction and platform in both homonationalist and European exceptionalist terms, where gays are embracing nationalist narratives and nationalist narratives are embracing gays in return.<sup>88</sup> The calculated mimicry of progressive language in concerningly conservative ideology normalizes legacies of intersecting violences, indicating that:

Homonationalism, thus, is not simply a synonym for gay racism, or another way to mark how gay and lesbian identities became available to conservative political imaginaries; it is not another identity politics, not another way of distinguishing good queers from bad queers, not an accusation, and not a position. It is rather a facet of modernity and a historical shift marked by the entrance of (some) homosexual bodies as worthy of protection by nation-states, a constitutive and fundamental reorientation of the relationship between the state, capitalism, sexuality.<sup>89</sup>

Adoption of homosexuality into cultural citizenship acts as a shield against Islam in order to perform progressiveness and protect the norms that mobilize politically salient identities for the protection of European states and norms. Gays and lesbians, here, are really a front and pawn to the larger preservation of white Dutch self-conceptions of superiority.

IHLIA LGBT Heritage, as a direct result of the gay emancipation movement that transitioned Dutch society into a state of homoprotectionism, is a product of the assimilationist

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<sup>87</sup> Viet Thanh Nguyen, “Just Memory,” (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2017), 17.

<sup>88</sup> Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, xxiv.

<sup>89</sup> Puar, “Rethinking Homonationalism,” 337.

and normativizing mindsets that have given it platform to exist; by extension, the histories and materials within the archive actively—though arguably subconsciously and counterintuitively—reinforce the structures that demand invisibility and docility from queer subjects. IHLIA benefits from this homoprotectionist state, as they are rewarded with funding and platforms when they highlight histories that frame oppression as an experience that is no longer enacted by straight, white Dutch society.

## IHLIA LGBT HERITAGE:

IHLIA LGBT Heritage was founded in 1978, beginning with gay student activism pushing for access to gay materials and later turning to collecting for themselves outside of existing libraries and university programs. IHLIA was first established not as an archive at all, but as a gay documentation center officially titled Documentation Center for Gay Studies but affectionately nicknamed Homodok. Here, resources were recorded to reference people to materials throughout existing libraries, archives, and museums that addressed or included homosexuality, primarily citing information about cis gay men. This was part of a student movement centered in the University of Amsterdam and Vrije University, as Dutch students were demanding and creating the first Gay and Lesbian Studies departments of the universities.<sup>90</sup> Homodok contributed to this larger goal of reclaiming gay history and studies for gay people, where students created:

workshops and discussions about setting up work groups and structures to improve, promote and draw academic attention to research on gays and lesbians. One of these work groups was a documentation group, because literature about homosexuals was hard to find in ‘normal’ libraries and documentation centers... we wanted to make that type of literature accessible.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Jan, “From Shoebox to Gaysaurus,” (Amsterdam). Pieter, Interview, (Amsterdam, 2018).

<sup>91</sup> Jan, “From Shoebox to Gaysaurus.”

Students in Amsterdam were leaders in change throughout the 1960s and 70s, restructuring institutions and activist spaces alike to make room for the gay and lesbian students who studied there. Over time, Homodok's initial shoebox of documents came to include records from the COC and gay magazines from previous decades, and later combined collections with the Lesbian Archive of Amsterdam (LAA) and the Anna Blaman House in 1999 to formally create IHLIA LGBT Heritage.<sup>92</sup> Through their actions, "Homodok was established in order to serve a particular community, and at the time of its inception was considered particularly radical in the international academic arena."<sup>93</sup> While Homodok's inception may have made waves for its newness, it is not as radical as academics may have given it credit for, in seeing radical as reaching the root of problems.

The gay documentation center eventually accessed resources necessary to establish its own archive collections: what has grown to be IHLIA LGBT Heritage as it exists today. Homodok didn't become IHLIA in title until it joined collections with competing lesbian archives in 2000 to expand and include bisexual, transgender, and intersex materials.<sup>94</sup> Now, IHLIA describes itself by saying that anyone can reach out for "information about gay men, lesbian women, bisexuals & transgenders, their history, world and culture."<sup>95</sup> Especially by collecting and protecting stories from queer communities in countries where it is not safe to be openly gay, IHLIA is trying to "do what no one else is doing," in collecting LGBT material.<sup>96</sup> This adjustment in subject matter came about after Homodok moved to an larger, independent space outside of the University of Amsterdam, and the university was no longer able to continue

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<sup>92</sup> Jan, Interview, (Amsterdam, 2018).

<sup>93</sup> Reid, "History of the Past Is the Trust of the Present," 203.

<sup>94</sup> Jan, Interview.

<sup>95</sup> "Meest Gestelde Vragen," (Amsterdam, IHLIA LGBT Heritage, 2018).

<sup>96</sup> Jan, Interview.

their sponsorship of Homodok; federal grants filled these gaps.<sup>97</sup> With the altering in funding sources came a turn towards institutionalization; IHLIA moved into the largest Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam (OBA) public library location in 2007, where they do not pay rent but use the collection and office spaces made available to them.<sup>98</sup> What was previously a small community documentation resource is now the largest LGBT-related archive in Europe.

### *FUNDING:*

IHLIA's institutional funding comes from the Dutch federal government's Department of Emancipation within the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science.<sup>99</sup> This funding comes with the condition that IHLIA centers LGBT emancipation within their collections and exhibits, but there is not strong supervision or influence in determining what subjects and materials fall under this category.<sup>100</sup> The task of defining what falls within the emancipation category is left to the interpretation of the archivists. This allows staff to choose the materials they put into an archive and the histories they display, as long as they match this undefined emancipative narrative.

Archives are inherently inseparable from the agendas of their funding sources, as there comes to be a pattern in which the institution becomes reliant upon funding to make ends meet, covering expenses ranging from paying archivists to requesting new accessions, then seeks to please the funders in order to not lose the money that supports them. Donors fund the projects they want to see—those that fit narratives that profit themselves—the project comes to fruition with donor influence, archivists feel reliant upon funding for the continued existence of the

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<sup>97</sup> Pieter, Interview.

<sup>98</sup> Amalia, Interview.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Jan, Interview.

archive, then continue to work with donors in a cycle of manipulative dependency. Archives and the materials within them are influenced by:

who owns them; on whose authority they depend; the political context in which they are visited; the conditions under which they are accessed; the distance between what is sought and what is found; the manner in which they are decoded and how what is found there is presented and made public.<sup>101</sup>

Funding and the powers behind resource allocation have massive power over the archive, and, by extension, the history that goes into and out of it. The conditions assigned with the Department of Emancipation's funding, the authorities of the collection, and the public presentation of information all come into prominent play when looking at IHLIA's newest and current-largest exhibit.

The national department offering funds encourages topics of LGBT emancipation, wanting to include as many people as possible. Due to this public funding, the staff—most prominently the archive manager—mirrors this federal goal of increased diversity. On the surface, this seems and is incredibly beneficial, but even still, this emancipation expectation risks restricting the archive, as the everyday materials that can be added to a community archive may be undervalued or overlooked for not contributing enough to a liberationist narrative.

More than that, representation has turned to prioritize white, cis, heterosexual audiences rather than marginalized groups already erased from historical memory. Since receiving federal funding, IHLIA has come to accession more normative collections, such as academic secondary sources over gay primary sources or fictional literature.<sup>102</sup> This is motivated by an increased priority of maintaining that funding, leading archivists to center heterosexual comfort with gay material over seeking out a more diverse historical record. Archivists risk subconsciously

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<sup>101</sup> Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive," 23.

<sup>102</sup> Jan, Interview.

censoring themselves and the materials they take in, out of fear of repercussions from those who fund archival projects.

Federal encouragement of liberationist narratives in community collections follows a pattern in which the Dutch government imagines its own progressiveness. Given national patterns of homonationalism, IHLIA's federal funding serves as a red flag, indicating that the archive is used by the government to further evidence their construction of a gay utopia within the country. The archive itself and those who manage it may not intend to participate in these structures, but they are used as a pawn in this national image nonetheless. By investing in an institution so publicly addressing gay identity, the kingdom of the Netherlands co-opts the work of gay liberation for its own "progressive" national image, without addressing continued societal issues of violence and heteronormativity. Though initially created for members of Dutch lesbian and gay communities, IHLIA now works to please the larger institutions that sponsor it. IHLIA's growth and federal sponsorship exemplify the assimilationist homosexual methods that continue to shape the archive's mentality.

Prioritizing already-normalized gay narratives in an LGBTI archive reproduces assimilationist and unproductive ideology that characterized the gay emancipation movement at the period of IHLIA's founding. Dutch gay activism has primarily and collectively been, "driven by imitation (repetition of the same or in the service of maintaining the same) rather than innovation (openness to disruption of the same, calling out to the new),"<sup>103</sup> and routinely appeals to federal authority. This is only reinforced through public funding, which validates behaviors that do not counteract state and social norms. Presenting only stories and identities that are already comfortable—or at least familiar—to the Dutch public does not further the emancipation

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<sup>103</sup> Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, xx.

of queer Netherlanders, but instead leans into the idea that expressions outside of these norms are uncomfortable and unfit for public platforms. While receiving public funding, IHLIA is unknowingly used as a tool by the Department of Emancipation to further an image of national progressiveness that the Dutch government works to project.

### *AUDIENCE:*

Strongly influenced by the government's encouragement to make public materials as representative of the public as possible, IHLIA has turned to filtering their materials for a larger, heterosexual public. These anticipated straight viewers influenced curators' and archivists' approach to *With Pride*, indicating that "Audience dictates history as much as those who write it."<sup>104</sup> This idealized heterosexual audience vaguely contradicts IHLIA's designated purpose to represent the LGBTI community, since creating material for heterosexual audiences does not guarantee further learning or acceptance from straight people, but may further ostracize queer individuals who may have hoped to see more of themselves in this accessible public space. To recognize the ways in which histories are at times shaped by their audiences, when recalling queer pasts "in relation to the call for a queer archive, it becomes essential to discuss for whom we are expected to narrate our feelings and experiences, for whom we should make sense of these feelings and experiences, for whom the archive of feelings should transfer its content."<sup>105</sup> Putting queer history and emotion on display for a heterosexual public implies that even queer history is not for queer people.

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<sup>104</sup> Eileen Hogan, "Audience Dictates History as Much as Those Who Write It Thanks for Coming to My Ted Scream," (Indianapolis, Twitter, 2019).

<sup>105</sup> Edenheim, "Lost and Never Found," 45.

IHLIA's collections are filled with miles of materials that fall into the Dutch government's category of "emancipation."<sup>106</sup> It seems to be a positive, well-intentioned goal to be as inclusive as possible within each archival project, and diversity is necessary for genuine representation of marginalized people. However, catering an exhibit about gay resistance to straight visitors does not liberate gay people, no matter how much the narratives claim liberation. If outreach is turning to heterosexuals for validation of history, the purpose of community archives is inherently disrupted. The memories preserved become a search for acceptance, rather than a defiant declaration of existence.

At the opening event of *With Pride*, the primary attendees were gay men who had participated in the activism on display. Staff members managing IHLIA unanimously claim that outreach, especially to young and/or straight people, is one of the biggest objectives the archive has taken on, so they appreciated the crowd but were disappointed by the incomplete turnout.<sup>107</sup> Viewers of any age, gay or straight, who are unused to interacting with archival materials, show that as Mbembe has argued, "however we define archives, they have no meaning outside the subjective experience of those individuals who, at a given moment, come to use them. It is this subjective experience that places limits on the supposed power of the archives."<sup>108</sup>

Recently, IHLIA has turned to more public methods of presenting gay history, explicitly doing so through exhibits constructed from material within IHLIA's collections.<sup>109</sup> Four times a year, the archive turns over a corner of its space in the Amsterdam public library to display a

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<sup>106</sup> Jan, Interview.

<sup>107</sup> Amalia, Interview.

<sup>108</sup> Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive," 23.

<sup>109</sup> See Tiffany Sutton's "How Museums Do Things without Words," Chloe Paver's "You Shall Know Them By Their Objects: Material Culture and Its Impact in Museum Displays about National Socialism," and Gerard Koskovich's "Displaying the Queer Past: Purposes, Publics, and Possibilities at the GLBT History Museum."

small exhibit of past or present LGBTI life. This is a distinct space that moves outside of normative Dutch narratives to highlight international experiences, doing so by, “invit[ing] two times a year an artist to show her or his work. With that, we try to present the diversity of our community, so we give attention to every part of our community.”<sup>110</sup> At the time of the interview, a photoseries documenting the life of a trans woman in South Africa, including events such as her wedding and gender-affirming genital reconstruction surgery. When exhibiting on a larger platform, however, IHLIA fell short of these efforts towards presenting diverse, new stories.

### *WITH PRIDE*<sup>111</sup>

*With Pride* is an exhibit put on by IHLIA in celebration of the archive’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the main exhibition space of Amsterdam’s largest public library. Commissioned by IHLIA staff members, curated by historical workshopping company Van Gisteren, and creatively designed by Vandejong Creative Agency, it was open 8 November 2018 to 23 February 2019. The exhibit had been conceptualized over two years, and after a long process of translating an archive into a museum, opened for the public. Towards the beginning of planning, the team had hoped to focus on the activism that took place in the founding year, 1978, to “show where it all began as community archives,” but in the attempt to appeal to a larger audience, the subject ended up broadening to a more general overview of gay activism since IHLIA’s founding.<sup>112</sup>

The November edition of IHLIA’s monthly newsletter advertises *With Pride*, describing it by saying, “*With Pride* shows that the lhbti<sup>113</sup> struggle is part of a broader social change that

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<sup>110</sup> Amalia, Interview.

<sup>111</sup> Select photos from the exhibit can be found on page 51.

<sup>112</sup> Amalia, Interview.

<sup>113</sup> The Dutch equivalent of LGBTI: lesbisch, homoseksueel, biseksueel, transgender, interseks (lhbti).

not only affects a minority, but all of us.”<sup>114</sup> Van Gisteren, the company commissioned to curate the exhibit from IHLIA collections, goes into even more specific depth about the exhibit. They describe *With Pride* on their website by saying:

Visitors are welcomed in a world of lesbian guerrillas, safe sex activism, Gay Games and discos with acid house. Through various theme worlds the visitor experiences the turbulent history of forty years of lhbt battle. Special pieces from the IHLIA collection, supplemented with photographs and personal stories of pioneers who were there at the time, create a picture of what the emancipation struggle has yielded for lhbt people and for society as a whole.<sup>115</sup>

This description identifies the array of gay experiences displayed within the exhibit. By selecting highlights of activism and community energy since the late 1970s, *With Pride* gives a general overview of gay movements and history of the past 40 years, with some lesbian and trans narratives included throughout.

### *Walkthrough:*

Just before reaching the library’s main information desk, there is a small white sign with pink lettering that reads “With Pride” and points to a staircase that you’re fairly certain didn’t exist a few weeks ago. The words are in all-caps, and the “W” is made with two upside down pink triangles.<sup>116</sup> The white, marble-esque stairs turn to lead into the exhibit, and with each step you’re greeted by more pink waiting for you at the top.

The first thing one would see was “40 Jaar lhbt Strijd,” (translated to “40 Years of LGBTI Struggle”— the whole exhibit is in Dutch, other than the names of its five themes) and arrows pointing to the entrance.<sup>117</sup> As one continues to rise, there was a level underneath that has separate messages of “Starting A Movement” and the *With Pride* logo. On the right side, there

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<sup>114</sup> *With Pride*, (Amsterdam, Openbare Bibliotheek Amsterdam, 2018).

<sup>115</sup> “Randprogrammering With Pride.” (Amsterdam, IHLIA LGBT Heritage, 2018).

<sup>116</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>117</sup> See Figure 2.

was a panel filled with a description of the exhibit. The words were printed on tarp panels hung up on thin metal fencing, as was everything else in the exhibit except for objects in glass cases and a handful of signs with wood bases. The designers of the exhibit, an outsourced company called Vandejong, were intentional about using materials that could be found on the streets, as they, “took the strong activist character of the early movements as a starting point. The streets were the stage for activism, so [they] took street related materials to recreate a 3-dimensional, immersive stage for activism.”<sup>118</sup> White and pink make up the main color scheme, as those two make up the signs, text, and backgrounds. “Starting a Movement” is one of the five themes of the exhibit, so it is written on a pink background in a white font made to look like the words were spraypainted. These themes are the only displays written in English, as every other description is Dutch.

Walking in to the opening of the exhibit, there is a sign straight ahead that writes, “Potten and flikkers” (“dykes and faggots”) and “from 1978 to 2018 with pride” and points to the left.<sup>120</sup> Before following that sign, though, the first pocket of the exhibit is off to the right. This area is focused on lesbian activism—the only part of the exhibit that centers women, beyond a later section using a transgender woman as an example in trans medical history. The main images displayed are two black and white portraits of iconic lesbian activists Tania Leon and Maaïke Meijer—each with descriptions and small biographies next to them—a portrait of a butch sitting on a motorcycle in front of balloons and a banner with a description on the start of lesbian subcultures, and four photos of lesbian protests. In the center of these, there is a blown-up photo of a pin with a pink and grey striped triangle with “Lesboos” typed on it.<sup>121</sup> There is a light

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<sup>118</sup> Lars, Email interview, (Amsterdam, 2018).

<sup>120</sup> See Figure 5.

<sup>121</sup> See Figure 3.

shining directly down upon the pin, lighting that up brighter than the pictures next to it—to the extent that the single Black lesbian furthest to the side is left almost in shadow. More scans of pins line the bottom left, while protest flyers and photos fill the bottom middle. Surrounded by images of protests, there is a video playing clips of footage from protests as the song “Heroes” by David Bowie covers the audio. The rightmost wall on the backside of the entrance is made up entirely of writing that details the rise of the gay movements of the late 70s. In this same direction, protest photos continue overhead. Back towards the “potten and flikkers” sign, there is a wooden display case in which more lesbian pins are laid out next to books *Lesbisch Prachtboek* (*Lesbian Splendor Book*) by Maaïke Meijer and *Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde. This leads to the next topic, following the arrow to the “Fighting Taboos” section of the exhibit.

AIDS activism of the 1980s captured this fight against taboos. This is the largest section of the exhibit. Additionally, it has the widest variety of material types on display, as it holds not only photos of protests and an AIDS activist, but also pins, t-shirts, flags, a SILENCE = DEATH poster, an ACT UP recreation of an advertisement for the 1978 movie “Heaven Can Wait,” and digitized copies of letters written by a man who died of AIDS. Many of the materials either say or are associated with ACT UP. When you first walk up, a larger-than-life yellow ACT UP pin is the first thing drawing your eye before you see a panel of information to the left and protest photo of men holding up an “AIDS Knows No Borders” banner next to two “Take Care / Living Post-HIV” flags above. Posters discussing AIDS hang behind these.<sup>122</sup> Continuing to the right is a longer panel organized in thirds between the movie poster digitized letters, and a photo of Jehuda Sofer. A few paragraphs next to his photo tell that Sofer was a journalist highly involved in gay and Jewish communities and activism until his death of AIDS in 1990. The letters in the

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<sup>122</sup> See Figure 4.

middle were written by Terry “Dolly” Cooke, an English gay man who was the ringleader of a community of British immigrants in Amsterdam; he died of AIDS in 1992. Above the “Heaven Can Wait” parody poster is a quote from one of the founders of ACT UP Amsterdam, Erik Hamwijk, who says, “until now, the white middle-class homo determines the picture but this will change.” There is not evidence towards this claim indicated throughout *With Pride*.

As you walk towards the next theme, you pass a window overlooking the main floor of the library. This case hangs HIV/AIDS protest t-shirts. One has Keith Haring’s take on the classic, “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil,” image in which his figures have a pink triangle printed on their chest. Behind this is a small, single-panel display on gay entertainment, from theater to drag shows. In the center, there is a video playing of a gay dating show, with a print advertising the show just above. There are also three photos of entertainers, including one in the middle of a drag performance. Additionally, there is a program from a play that exemplifies the space in which theater has traditionally been an outlet for sexual and gender expression. Between two sections, a long fur coat hangs on a mannequin behind one of the caged stands, just below large photo of a femme person and next to a sign that says, “LGBTI With Pride” and “closets are for clothes.”<sup>123</sup>

The next section, “Claiming Rights,” is split between featuring clips of newspaper articles reporting on gay protests, information about the gay male activism group Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum (COC), and the first trans woman to access surgeries for medical transition in the Netherlands. Front and center is a wide panel of newspapers that depict narratives of solidarity, COC activism, and criticisms of gay federal policy. To the left are protest photos, pins, and a video from the COC. A panel to the right gives brief introduction to Aaïcha

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<sup>123</sup> See Figure 6.

Bergamin, a sex working trans woman who was the first trans person in the Netherlands to undergo gender-affirming bottom surgery in 1972 and have her legal documents changed to reflect her gender. She is the only trans person depicted throughout the exhibit.

Almost as sizable as the AIDS activism section is, “Celebrating Life,” depicting parties and clubs where gay social life thrives. A full panel is filled with blown-up polaroid photos capturing smiling people—a stark change from the solemnity of the AIDS protests previously displayed.<sup>124</sup> Here is another glass case, this time displaying materials from local gay bars. This includes stickers, handout cards, a pile of condoms, and two ten-inch-tall dolls dressed in leather and a police uniform that mirror styles from kink scenes. Turning to the right is a compilation of signs that say, “Act Up!,” “Lesbian Liberation,” “Love Love Love,” “Pro Sex Pro Choice,” “Je Bent Zelf Een Flikker” (“You Yourself Are a Faggot”), “Gay capital of the world,” “From Amsterdam,” with the *With Pride* logo beneath each phrase. Additionally, there is a tower of panels with posters advertising cis gay dances and leather events, topped with a disco ball.<sup>125</sup> Some of these advertisements include nudity. Further through the section is a line of horizontal panels describing specific bars and clubs that have come to be historic throughout the city, such as Club iT and Café t’Mandje, including photos of patrons and drag queens posing in these locations.<sup>126</sup>

*With Pride* ends on “Becoming Visible,” addressing the marriage equality legalization in 2001 and the increased presence of gay material in popular media. This includes a panel with photos of the Gay Games, an international event paralleling the Olympics intended to promote inclusion and connection through sports. There is also a photo of an interracial gay couple

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<sup>124</sup> See Figure 7.

<sup>125</sup> See Figures 7 and 8.

<sup>126</sup> See Figure 9.

kissing to depict the legalization of marriage, and a video excerpt of a TV show with gay characters. Finally, *With Pride* opens up to a small auditorium-looking space that leads to its exit.<sup>127</sup>

Photo excerpts of the exhibit can be found below. These images were taken by the author and reproduced with permission from the archive manager, a member of the *With Pride* creation team on behalf of IHLIA.

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<sup>127</sup> See Figure 10.

Exhibit Photos:



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7 (above), Figure 8 (below)



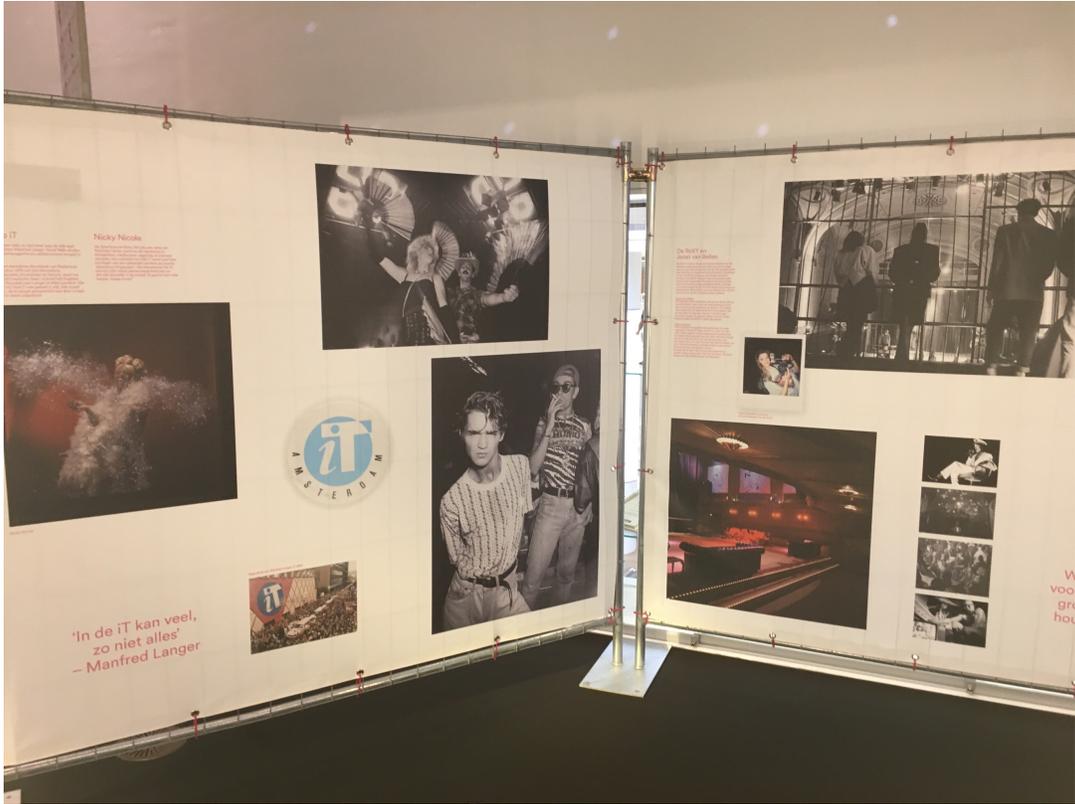


Figure 9 (above), Figure 10 (below)



## *Conceptualizing:*

The struggle to cover 40 years of Dutch LGBT activism in a relatively small exhibit requires a massive amount of filtering through archival material to decide what stories are most valuable to present. This prioritizing process ties back to the conditional state funding of emancipatory subjects and widespread representation. Curators' central question, then, had to be, how they can present as much material as possible in a way that is understandable to as many people as possible, regardless of LGBT status. This required analyzing accessibility to not only LGBT people familiar with queer language, and determining difficult balances between visual and written presentations. Since exhibits are not a traditional archival task, IHLIA turned to outsourcing curation to a communications company, Van Gisteren, to help archivists navigate the masses of material and establish methods that make queer material appealing to a wider (read: heterosexual) public. A separate company, Vandejong, did the spatial design.

IHLIA's director described the exhibition process as "terrible," but not for the quality of curatorial work done or end result, upon which she bestowed high praise. Rather, she identified painful emotion in letting go of all the stories that couldn't be told in one exhibit and putting aside personal attachment to detail for the sake of sharing any information at all—going as far as to say in an interview that it felt as if it took years off her life to watch miles of narratives translated into just a few sentences.<sup>128</sup> Finding the balance between what needs to be shared to get a point across is the struggle of those who interact with history. Filtering becomes difficult when one is able to see the extent to how smaller, seemingly insignificant details, influence the overarching happenings of an event. Even the exhibit team's historian described himself as struggling with overexplaining, then discussed five decades of movement waves that led to gay

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<sup>128</sup> Amalia, Interview.

student activism in the 1970s when asked about his role at IHLIA—as without these decades of radical energy, the archive itself may never have existed.<sup>129</sup> It was incredibly difficult for the team to find a balance between visuals and written word that satisfied all parties.<sup>130</sup> Overcoming this detail-oriented mindset to access layman’s terminology was, in part, why it was deemed necessary to outsource curation of *With Pride* to communications business Van Gisteren. Through *With Pride*, outsourced curators create their own construction of gay history, anticipating visitors who have little to no prior introduction to the material.

IHLIA directors decided to outsource production of *With Pride* because the scale of the exhibit fell outside of their traditional connections with the public.<sup>131</sup> Within their usual role, “Archival institutions, unlike libraries, do not publicly display their holdings to offer a panoptic view to their clients. But they do display the knowledge-power of the finding aids as representations of what the public may not see openly but may expect to and behind the closed doors of the prisonlike repositories.”<sup>132</sup> By creating an exhibit, IHLIA has used the library space they physically occupy to step outside of a familiar role of introverted archive. This has brought them to a platform that puts the archive on a nerve-wracking new level of public visibility.

This begs the question, why bother to prioritize subject quantity over quality in the first place? Even the collections director, one of the students who founded the archive in 1978, asked the same question, as he wished the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibit would have focused more on the many activisms taking place during the opening year rather than trying to cover events since its opening.<sup>133</sup> He described his involvement in the exhibit brainstorm process as more passive,

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<sup>129</sup> Pieter, Interview.

<sup>130</sup> Amalia, Interview.

<sup>131</sup> Amalia, Interview.

<sup>132</sup> Eric Ketelaar, “The Panoptical Archive,” (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, 2006), 147.

<sup>133</sup> Jan, Interview.

limited to retrieving items from the archive requested by curators; had he been more involved in the curation process, he would have encouraged a narrower focus instead of glossing over a wide variety of subjects. The reasoning for a more generalized scope was not to show off as much archival material as possible, but lies in the goals of making *With Pride* appeal to visitors outside of the LGBTQ community—phrased as wanting to make the exhibit and the historical narratives within it as accessible as possible.

The exhibit highlights only four individuals who are not white, cis, and gay. The presence of a Black lesbian from Sister Outsider, a Jewish man with ties to Israel-Palestine, a white trans woman, and a Black drag queen make up the extent of diversity throughout the exhibit, while every other piece of media shows only those who fit the three above categories that are more normalized and tolerated in Dutch society. Their presence flows with the exhibit so they don't look haphazardly included, but *With Pride* leans into a sense of performative diversity, including people marginalized even within the LGBTQ community in the attempt to represent as many narratives as possible, while simultaneously trying to avoid critique for what comes off as an unspoken diversity quota.

The curators and IHLIA archivists who teamed up to create *With Pride* were in control of this. Over the year leading up to the exhibit, they prioritized 'acceptable' experiences and individuals, consciously or not. Even when they looked for wider representation, they were inevitably limited by the failure of the archive to collect material on non-white and non-gay Dutch queer identity over the past four decades. Many of the people who work at IHLIA have either been there for one to two decades, while multiple, including the head archivist and the archive's historian, have been around since the beginning of the collections. Of course influenced by a society whose only fragile tolerance comes with conditions of normality, the lack

of diverse material very well may be connected to decades of disinterest in, disregard for, and/or dismissal of queer experiences beyond their own.

### *OUTREACH:*

Making the archive accessible is a first step to sharing queer history. For a long time, IHLIA's information desk has been the main point of connection between the archive and public. 12:00-17:00 Monday through Thursday, an IHLIA staff member or volunteer is manning this desk to retrieve archival materials for researchers, answer any questions for people who approach, and lead tours. This desk is located on the third floor of the OBA, alongside a desk reserved for IHLIA researchers, a section of literature from the collection, and a rotating exhibit that highlights new queer art every three months.<sup>134</sup> These resources are beneficial to those who know what they're looking for and can show up during traditional 9-5 work hours. If someone wants access to documents from the archive, they must email their request 24 hours in advance, already knowing specifically what they want.<sup>135</sup> This does not make the archive accessible to any library patron just walking in to explore, or any working person who wants to do research outside of their 9-5 job. IHLIA is hoping to expand its public relations even further by focusing more strongly on exhibitions like *With Pride*, which share queer history in more visible and publicly accessible ways than the resources made available by limited archive volunteers.

One way they are doing this is by stepping outside of Amsterdam to further representation of more rural Dutch LGBTI communities. National expansions of *With Pride* are in the works and have slowly gained traction in the past year and a half. IHLIA director is reaching out to libraries, archives, and museums across the Netherlands to establish smaller,

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<sup>134</sup> See Figure 13 in Appendix A.

<sup>135</sup> "Meest Gestelde Vragen."

traveling With Pride exhibits for local communities. This is to give platform to LGBT history and activism in the hopes of overcoming the silent-but-prevalent avoidance of homosexuality. Local institutions are only asked to make connections with local LGBTQ communities and find queer materials already within their collections so local narratives are put into the exhibit; IHLIA handles everything else. Even this is not enough to convince many of the people who run these establishments. Their biggest resistance is in the idea that an exhibit would be completely unnecessary.<sup>136</sup>

These efforts exemplify the extent to which homophobia is prominent throughout the Netherlands, but is prevalent in its subtlety. Homosexuality is not taboo or outright renounced, per say, but treated across the country as if gay visibility no longer needs attention because of this apparent national tolerance, while assuming that gay people are not present throughout most of the country.<sup>137</sup> In trying to create personalized exhibits for local institutions around the country, she has come to face something even more complicated to defeat than open resistance: denial. Directors of museums and libraries across the country have directly told her, “There are no gays here, you need to go to Amsterdam,” in response to her asking about local queer communities.<sup>138</sup> Any queer person, specifically a historian who has been trained to identify queer coding within archives, can see the blatant untruth of the statement, as queerness has never been limited by geography, only visibility; but people cannot be convinced of what they refuse to see. Straight people have immense abilities to talk themselves out of recognizing queerness, and cannot be convinced to value putting queer history on a platform. If they do not see queer people existing in their space, they do not extend energy or resources to accommodate them; by not

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<sup>136</sup> Amalia, Interview.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

allowing platforms for LGBTQ content, they further the closeting and invisibility of queer folks in their area.

These attitudes of neglect establish direct barriers between LGBT Netherlanders and access to their histories. Those in charge of archival and exhibit material refuse legitimacy of queer existence in their spaces, and compound the invisibility by further refusing gay material available through the traveling *With Pride* exhibits. Closed off behaviors of curators and directors across the country stand in opposition to Dutch narratives of tolerance. The administrators dismissing a local *With Pride* exhibit have eradicated their sense of responsibility and contributions towards preserving queer historical memory, through their association with Dutch citizenship. Their practices of “tolerance” demand a complete invisibility of homosexuality but are deemed acceptable for their lack of outright aggression. Erasure as a method of structural violence is not given a single critical thought from those turning down LGBTQ+ exhibits, except from those at IHLIA trying to bring local queer history to an accessible public forefront.

Some hope with this continuation of *With Pride* is to address and encourage ongoing conversations and awareness of LGBT subjects within educational-adjacent spaces by connecting people—both archivists and not—with their existing collections. Not only this, but it allows more directly for local communities to select and hopefully help display the information they want shared about themselves, on their own terms and for themselves. This is vastly important work. Goals of expanding LGBTI representation across the country are necessary, but should take place alongside introspection of the ways IHLIA itself is closing itself off to and erasing members of the LGBTQ community within their own spheres—though in beliefs and behavior rather than policy or methods visible to the surface.

## ARCHIVAL CONTINUITY

Some of IHLIA's efforts towards outreach revolve around hopes for passing down and continuing the archive. It is a growing priority of existing archivists to attract the interest and energy of young people to the archives so that community collections continue to be preserved and grown.<sup>139</sup> Even with an understanding that the archive needs younger people to take on the collections as current archivists retire, generational gaps are a road block to sustainability and outreach. It is not that young people are not interested in history or archives, but that IHLIA is pushing them away at the same time they are trying to connect.<sup>140</sup> People go to the spaces in which they see themselves represented and respected, so if their identity is missing, or is present and ridiculed or demeaned, they will not show up. Since the 1990s, there has been a boom in visibility for transgender and nonbinary individuals, alongside reclamation of the word "queer" as not only a group category but complete individual identity. This wave has only been exacerbated by technology of the past 15 years. IHLIA, however, has not kept up—and not out of accidental ignorance.

The institution and its staff members are most commonly called out for centering white cis gay histories. These histories are ones that center older white cis gay narratives, in language geared towards straight people, with just enough mention of marginalized people's experiences to avoid criticism. The critiques they are tired of getting reflect the gap between a genuine interest in diversity and a performative one. Despite this, IHLIA staff members tend to detach their own sense of responsibility for learning and representing in favor of a, "what can you do?" dismissive attitude.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Amalia, Interview.

<sup>140</sup> Floris, Interview.

<sup>141</sup> Floris, Interview.

In this case, what can be done requires listening and opening the archive up to new, potentially uncomfortable, frames of thought. Instead, “they’ve grown quite annoyed that every time they have an exhibition, they get some kind of critique. Because of this... they have adopted a very skeptical and dismissive attitude towards political correctness and inclusion.”<sup>142</sup> When these critiques are pointing out the exclusion of people of color or erasure of bisexuality in women-loving-women content within exhibits, the issues are larger than just “political correctness.” What they may interpret as policing of their language is really a critique of the ways they reinforce harmful systems of power that exclude people of color and queer people—especially those who fall into the intersection of both categories—from historical records.

Younger LGBTQ+ people are more visibly adopting more publicly-illegible definitions of themselves,<sup>143</sup> outside of the systems that utilize categorization towards structural violence. From recognizing “queer” as both an umbrella (all-inclusive, collective) term and whole independent identity to a detachment from binary gender, non-conformity to traditional expressions of gender and sexuality is in itself becoming a norm. With this, however, younger queer people who identify beyond binaries find resistance even from older gays, as the, “persistence of the homosexual/heterosexual binary in the public sphere frustrates attempts to advance bisexual and queer identities, despite the increasing possibility of narrating personal experiences in these terms.”<sup>144</sup> The heterosexual/homosexual binary has been thus far uninterrupted by the extension of cultural citizenship to gays and lesbians; subversion of this

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> See Sasha Roseneil’s, “Queer Frameworks and Queer Tendencies: Towards an Understanding of Postmodern Transformations of Sexuality;” Jukka Lehtonen’s chapter, “Young People’s Definitions of Their Non-Heterosexuality,” in *Unification and Marginalisation of Young People*; and Matthew Waites’ “The Fixity of Sexual Identities.”

<sup>144</sup> Waites, “The Fixity of Sexual Identities,” 559.

binary transgresses these structures, however, and is by extension seen as disrupting the assimilationist norms that allotted gay people tolerance in the Netherlands in the first place.

“Queer” as a radical, uncategorizable identity is not included in the history IHLIA works to preserve. In fact, it was a deliberate decision to leave out the Q or plus sign when describing IHLIA as an LGBTI institution, and “the IHLIA [workers] are always very skeptical about queer and nonbinary identities.”<sup>145</sup> Under the claim that there are just too many identity letters to include, IHLIA staff makes excuses to cover the changing language. That is, however, the point of ending the acronym with “queer” and/or a plus sign at the end of the acronym, making it LGBTQ(+). It is the role of an LGBTI archive to represent individuals within the LGBTQ+ community, and their failure to not extend this inclusivity to queer people who do not fit in binary identity boxes keeps those queer histories out of archival boxes. While terminology of queer and transgender identity has adjusted relatively rapidly since the 1990s, it is negligent for those preserving queer history to not wholeheartedly attempt to keep up; sharing history requires keeping up with the present. In a way, they are called to challenge their own structures in the ways they called heterosexual people to do in the 1970s; any discomfort associated with this is merely a symptom of adjusting the ways one sees the world, which is a necessary task while humanizing someone outside of what was previously known. Archivists’ patterns of evading updates to their thought to meet the needs of queer people beyond their own white, cis identities, also extends to gender diversity.

Only one IHLIA staff member identifies as transgender and nonbinary, and is incessantly misgendered by their coworkers; their fragile status as a temporary researcher leaves them in a precarious situation where they aren’t able to speak up against older peers who treat respect for

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<sup>145</sup> Floris, Interview.

nonbinary identities as an inconvenience. Paralleling the demand for normative behaviors from Dutch society's tolerance of homosexuality, tolerance for trans identities extend—at best—only as far as a person is willing to conform to gender binaries. From medical transition options to having their narratives collected in this gay archive, trans people are trapped in a society that holds, “an ‘outdated’ perception of transgender people as people who are ‘born within the wrong body’, who transition completely from male to female or female to male, thereby fitting within their binary construction.”<sup>147</sup> These structural microaggressions are violent against trans people; archivists' continuation of these views monolithizes trans experience and removes agency for a category of individuals who do not ascribe to cisgender standards of the gender binary.

One IHLIA staff member was particularly aggressive against the use of they/them/their pronouns, refusing to do so even when asked.<sup>148</sup> They/them pronouns, frequently used by nonbinary and genderqueer people to express that they do not fit within masculine-feminine gender binaries, are an increasingly common identification for transgender young adults and adolescents. Transgender people and their allies recognize that it is transphobic to deny someone the decency of using their correct pronouns, and upon finding out this form of bigotry in a staff member of an LGBT archive, reasonably experience unease towards the institution that staff

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<sup>147</sup> Floris, Interview. For more in-depth information about and criticisms of the bureaucratic, binary, and restrictive medical transition and health care options available to Dutch transgender people—as well as more liberative and community-based options—see Bryan Miranda's “For Us, By Us: Amsterdam's Life-Saving Transgender Clinic.”

<sup>148</sup> As mentioned in the preface, I experienced this personally on my first day at the archive, when she responded to my clarification that I use he/him/his pronouns by saying, “That's fine, as long as it's not they/them.” Frequently I was still referred to with she/her pronouns. She later went on to say that she never used the correct pronouns of a previous nonbinary intern, due to her own discomfort with using “they” as a singular term, regardless of the emotional toll it may have taken on that intern. She also stated directly that if a protest against gender neutral bathrooms (commonly encouraged within trans activism for the security it offers to trans and nonbinary people) were to take place in Amsterdam, she would participate. This anti-trans rhetoric came following education from the archive manager, a nonbinary researcher, transgender exhibits, and, during the conversation, me. An apology was later offered for her tone, but not the ideas or statements.

member represents. It takes no stretch of the mind to assume that trans experiences outside of the gender binary—in both performance and identity—are excluded from that institution. Anyone who feels inconvenienced and invalidating towards identities they do not share should not be in a position where they have archival power over the memory of those identities. Archivist bias leads to historical erasure even from within community archives, and these archivists are not exempt from prejudices such as transphobia or racism on the basis of their sexuality. Support for trans people must include an appreciation for all forms of transness, not limited by the gender binary or cisgender beauty standards in passing and medical transition. Excluding nonbinary people from the historical narrative—as seen in *With Pride* when the only trans example included is of one woman who first got access to genital reconstruction surgery in the Netherlands to better fill a biologically binary definition of her own womanhood—starts with archivists’ refusals to learn and accept unfamiliar identities. With these attitudes, they discard a responsibility to keep up with changes within the LGBTQ community that demand attention and accommodation within the archive, and, by extension, historical memory.

## CONCLUSION:

Gay Netherlanders have spent too long trying to please a heterosexual society that does not want them to freely exist. Until queer existence is no longer influenced and molded by heterosexual norms, queer people will not be liberated. Legal or conditional acceptance is not liberation. Despite claims towards tolerance and national narratives of progressiveness, underlying motives against difference push out the sexual and multicultural traits that are decidedly Dutch characteristics. Both “formally and definitely informally, they do prioritize a certain audience that is not queer or identifies outside of a gender binary,”<sup>149</sup> and the narratives

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<sup>149</sup> Floris, Interview.

that they choose to share with the public through *With Pride* are indicative of that. Instead of following through with their marketing that IHLIA is for everyone regardless of identity, IHLIA staff members gatekeep queer historical memory through “an ethics of remembering one’s own,”<sup>150</sup> where they center their own comfort with binary, cis gayness over more fluid queer identities and expressions. If gay archivists won’t put in the work to learn about identities different than their own, why would they expect straight people to do the same? And if members of the LGBTQ community won’t stand in solidarity with queer, trans existence, then who will? This notion of an all-inclusive community is undermined when members of this imagined community are made to undergo the same hostile dismissiveness imposed by the same cisheterosexual society that oppresses other non-cisgender, non-heterosexual identities. Gay Dutch complacency in these structures reproduces structural violences that deny space to queer identity, people of color, and religious experience, and contribute to the cultural exploitation of LGBTIQ+ communities. As long as the histories being archived and publicly presented are limited to pasts that do not disturb restrictive constructions, queer people are being denied holistic experiences of their pasts.

By creating *With Pride*, IHLIA has stepped out of the archive to contribute more directly to the ways in which gays and lesbians are remembered. While successfully capturing highlights of 40 years of Amsterdam’s gay history, *With Pride* has not represented a more diverse audience to the extent that the archivists hoped and claimed. The subjects on display throughout the exhibit connect older and primarily white gay generations to their personal memories, which—while vital—are already familiar and normalized within Dutch public memory. *With Pride* reiterates and gives more detail to known white cis gay narratives, but does not bring in the

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<sup>150</sup> Nguyen, “Just Memory,” 9.

younger populations that staff members say they prioritize—much less people of color and trans folks. Sex work, an occupation historically intertwined with queer identity and experience, is also noticeably absent from the archive’s public record beyond the inclusion of sex worker Aaïcha Bergamin to discuss her significance in medical transition for transgender people in the Netherlands; this seems ironic and nearly-impossibly coincidental given the national legal status of that work. Staff members’ priorities of heterosexual audiences over queer youth exemplifies the current unsustainability of the archive, in this direction.

Only recently has there been indication of less-defensive responses to criticism, which would move the archive further in actively supporting diversity. Local Black queer groups have criticized *With Pride* for its barely-there inclusion of Black activism and organizations existing during the forty-year period addressed in the exhibit. IHLIA is responding not with dismissal, but by collaborating with members of this demographic. To make up for the initial negligences, IHLIA management has met twice with these groups, and they together have come to a decision that “2 researchers are creating content to make another part of the exhibition on black queer history in the Netherlands.”<sup>151</sup> This is a promising development, which will hopefully lead to an increase of representative content for both queers of color and other underrepresented queer groups in the first round of future exhibits. While more Black content could and should have been included in *With Pride* in its initial construction, this is an optimistic precedent for IHLIA to be deliberately moving into genuine diversity and representation of those who need it.

It is necessary to display queer history without attempting to make it palatable to straight audiences who do not share the same experiences. Sharing history is a declaration of gay existence, a source of education for audiences unfamiliar with gay pasts, and, most importantly, a

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<sup>151</sup> Amalia, Email interview, (Amsterdam, 2019).

beacon of hope for queers who may need to see their selves and feelings in an archive. An LGBTI archive should be the last place a young queer person should feel unwelcome and unrepresented. Welcome into the archive shouldn't be conditional or uneasy, when the people searching for their histories understand that queer archives, at their best, "can sometimes also be sanctuaries.... Sometimes, quite unintentionally, archives may be safe havens."<sup>152</sup> Archivist hostility towards newer identities further keeps queer young people from the archive, restricting the already systemically-limited opportunity to find their history in collections and risking the continued existence of the archive. If queer and gender non-conforming identities are not deemed genuinely and equally valuable within IHLIA on all levels, then the archive is no longer serving its purpose, and any declarations about outreach or diversity are empty. While the *With Pride* exhibit is spoken about with the intention of diversity bridging generational gaps, outreach to young people and their identities will not work if the people within it keep pushing away new forms of thought and expression. If an archive's survival is reliant upon its ability to be passed down, it is counterintuitive for archivists to reject the changes of the community they want to represent.

Having existed as an institution centering any kind of LGBTQ subject for 40 years is no small achievement; continued recording and collecting of queer history is necessary and must expand to keep up with present constructions of identity. The community-based aspect of an archive entirely does not exist if the archive and the people who manage it do not foster space (physical or emotional) for people who hold the identities that make up a community they claim to represent. Whatever political radicalism that once existed in creating a gay archive was lost with archivists' refusal to adapt understandings of sexuality and gender beyond the second-wave

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<sup>152</sup> Ketelaar, "The Panoptical Archive," 146.

liberationist period of its founding. To live up to the radical activism in which the archive has its roots, IHLIA must start by honestly and critically assessing what the narratives they want the archive to offer the public, and be upfront about that when discussing their goals of diversity. Inclusion of a more diverse, radical community should not be treated as a burden, afterthought, or personal attack, but rather necessary and valuable part of the archive, because queer people deserve to have their histories remembered.

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*With Pride* entrance, Amsterdam. Personal photograph by author. November 8, 2018.

*With Pride* end, Amsterdam. Personal photograph by author. November 3, 2018.

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*With Pride* sign, Amsterdam. Personal photograph by author. November 3, 2018.

*With Pride* Tower, Amsterdam. Personal photograph by author. November 3, 2018.

APPENDIX A:  
*IHLIA PHOTOS*<sup>153</sup>:



Figure 11 (above): IHLIA LGBT Heritage Logo



Figure 12: A small portion of IHLIA LGBT Heritage's collection.  
*Fictiecollectie* by G. Rameckers

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<sup>153</sup> Reproduced from IHLIA's website with permission from the archive manager.



Figure 13: Visitor reading space, information desk, and quarterly exhibition.  
Not pictured: Rows of public library materials from the literature collection.  
*Informatiebalie* by G. Rameckers

## APPENDIX B: *INTERVIEWS*

This baseline guide of interview questions was adapted within each interview to match individuals' roles/expertise and allow conversations to naturally flow:

- Tell me about your role at IHLIA.
  - What brought you to IHLIA?
  - What tasks are assigned to you? How many hours a week do you work?
  - How long have you been working for IHLIA?
    - Are you a volunteer or staff member?
  - Have you done personal or academic research through IHLIA?
- What experiences do you have with archives other than IHLIA?
- What current projects are going on? What are you doing now that *With Pride* is open?
- What kinds of stories do the collections you've seen tell? What are their subjects?
- How would you describe the structure of IHLIA? In the archives? Between workers?
- Where does IHLIA get its funding?
- Tell me about the *With Pride* exhibit.
  - What processes were required to create it? Meetings, design steps, etc.
    - Who was involved?
  - How long had *With Pride* been in the works before it opened?
  - What was your role in creating it?
  - What was the goal of the exhibit?
    - What did you want to show? Were you wanting to tell the history of the archive, gay movements, or something else?
  - Why was it spatially designed the way it is?
  - How did you decide which topics to focus on? Photos? Objects?
    - Who made these decisions? If a group, what were the dynamics? Were there disagreements in priorities
  - Why did you outsource construction?
    - How do you feel the company did? Is it what you wanted?
    - To what extent was there collaboration? What say did you have in the way it was designed?
    - What were some frustrations in the process?
  - Of the two entrance options, which do you prefer? Is there a "correct" entrance?
  - What, if anything, would you change about the exhibit?
- What is your favorite collection? Why?